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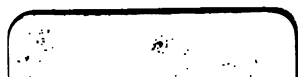
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46.

1341.





THE
PAST AND FUTURE
OF
THE BRITISH NAVY.

BY
THE HON. E. PLUNKETT,
COMMANDER R.N.



Non illi imperium pelagi, sævumque tridentem,
Sed mihi MARTÆ datum.

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THE PAST AND FUTURE OF THE BRITISH NAVY.

INTRODUCTION.

A FEW words, not as preface, for that, no one would read; but, to explain the writer's views as to the paramount necessity of proportioning and adapting our naval organisation to the new era which has commenced in maritime affairs.

I do not allude to those changes, alone, which steam will make, though the introduction of that power will *accelerate* the operations of war almost as much as it has of travelling; but to the improvements both in the nature and use of naval ordnance,—improvements, which competent judges consider will make future actions at sea far more decisive and destructive than any thing we have heretofore experienced, or can

easily imagine. The introduction of shell-guns alone is likely to double the loss in *personnel*, and to make the total destruction of ships, by foundering or explosion, an ordinary occurrence in naval actions.

But this is only one of the many improvements which have brought the *matériel* of naval ordnance to a degree of perfection our predecessors dreamed not of. Let any one look at the heavy and well-appointed tiers of a line of battle ship's guns; what formidable batteries are there! Not a gun under a 32-pounder, and many 8-inch shell-guns. How perfect in all their appointments! How simple yet how scientific those tangent sights, by which a distant object is struck with such wonderful precision! How excellent the arrangement of all the stores, and how rapidly are those ponderous pieces of ordnance manœuvred by skilful hands!

“Surely there is nothing more to desire here,” it will be said! No, not while the *personnel* corresponds to the *matériel* as now in peacetime it often does: but good indeed should be the gunners to whom this battery is confided. No such ordnance ever accompanied an army; and the three hundred guns which thundered at Waterloo, or at the great artillery battle of Vittoria, were pop-guns in comparison to these.

Yet to whom shall we have to entrust these destroying weapons, if we commission ten or twenty sail of the line to-morrow? At best, to raw merchant sailors—to men pressed out of coasters and colliers—to men who never saw a gun before,—to men who will blow off their own arms in loading, break their own or their neighbour's legs in firing, and point their guns, if they *do* point at all, as a school-boy does his new single-barrel, when he aims at a rabbit and shoots a beater.

I am not an alarmist nor a croaker; still less do I write with any political bias or personal motive. I do not underrate the vast additions to the material resources, nor the improvements in various departments of the Navy which have taken place of late years, and which *must* have taken place to maintain our relative position in a time of general progress.

But with the fullest confidence in our unimpaired naval resources, with a conviction that, humanly speaking, successes as brilliant as the past are in our power, I dread the application of an old system to entirely new circumstances. I believe the time is gone by when seven or eight hundred men scraped together in any way, and put into a ship of war, can be trusted to fight our battles. Against the Americans, who, though our equals in seamanship, follow our own system,

it *may* answer,—though it is throwing away all the chances derivable from a state of organised preparation: but against our *next-door neighbours* it might be attended with serious consequences.

At the commencement of former wars, which followed each other at short intervals, we always found some man-of-war's-men unemployed; or at the worst we opposed undisciplined seamen to men equally undisciplined and inferior as sailors. But in the event of a future war with France we may be sure of one thing: she will not send her ships to sea with untrained crews. Her position respecting colonies, and her peace-time[?] arrangements, do not require it; and against trained gunners mere seamanship will not always decide a battle. Yet beyond seamanship what can we look for in the merchant sailors, whom we expect to obtain by pressing, and who in these days will find themselves towed out to sea by steamers, and perhaps in action before it has been possible to teach them their first lesson in gunnery?

In mentioning France, here and elsewhere, I do so; first, because we cannot speak of our Navy irrespectively of an opponent (abstractly it is neither strong nor weak, adequate nor inadequate); and, secondly, because France, unlike

England or the United States, maintains in peace an organisation of her resources, which would enable her to take the field (or the sea) almost at a day's notice.

Those who have hitherto doubted the extent of naval preparations in France, will scarce continue to do so after the late vote of 4,000,000*l.* sterling, in addition to the ordinary estimates of about five millions, and a former "supplemental credit" of one and a half.* Nor is the significance of this extraordinary expenditure at all diminished by the fact of its origin. The new and formidable organisation of the French navy was devised, we are told, by a "central commission," presided over by the Prince de Joinville. It is, in fact, only the realisations of certain suggestions contained in His Royal Highness's pamphlet, well-known for its hostile spirit to this country; though a proper regard for *appearances* has interposed

* The vote here referred to (after discussion) stands thus:—

Hulls	-	-	-	-	58,574,000 francs.
Equipment and rigging	-	-	-	-	11,120,000
Ordnance	-	-	-	-	9,600,000
Steam-engines	-	-	-	-	12,000,000
Stores	-	-	-	-	33,500,000

Total 134,794,000

Of this sum 42,000,000 francs is an annual credit of 6,000,000 francs for seven years, voted last session over and above the ordinary credit.

some delay between the suggestions and their adoption.

The paternity of the sixty-six heavy frigates, and the thirty first-class war steamers, will not seem doubtful to those who remember the "Note sur l'Etat des Forces Navales de la France," in 1844.

But though the creation of this force is both intended, and we may add well calculated, to lessen the superiority which our numerous line-of-battle ships give us, we have no right to complain of it. With better reason, perhaps, we might complain of the seizure of military points by France*, in the direct track of our principal

* Mayotte and Nossi Bé, in the Straits of Madagascar, the principal route of our East India trade during part of the year. Also the Marquesas, Society Islands, and whatever else may be included in "Océanie," in the Pacific, which may be regarded as another route for our Eastern and especially our China trade. A glance at the map or chart will show that Mayotte could only be intended as a station for cruisers, for it has nothing to tempt commerce to its rock-beset shores. As a station for French cruisers in war, it would prove a worse thorn in our sides than the Mauritius did last war; and the possession of that island by France is said to have cost us many millions sterling, from the facilities it gave to those "glorieuses escadrilles," as the Prince de Joinville calls them, which preyed upon our commerce. This consideration prevented us from restoring the Mauritius in 1815; and it is to be hoped will prevent our suffering still more dangerous *points d'appui* from being seized on. The occupation of

trade,—positions useless to France in peace, but well chosen, as the Prince de Joinville observes, to inflict incalculable damage on our commerce in war.*

Still, whatever the designs of France may be, it is only our own inadvertence, false economy, or *over-confidence*, that can give them effect; and it is especially against the latter danger that I have attempted to offer some words of warning.

If excuse be necessary for this humble effort to serve my country, I must plead the example of the Royal Admiral above referred to, whose *pen* has certainly rendered as good service to France as his sword, without disparagement to the latter.

Though he has not attained to the high naval rank of the Princely Admiral, the writer of these observations might plead a longer course of service, with an equal regard for the future welfare of his own profession.

Madagascar by France would greatly lower the value of East India property in war, and raise insurances on vessels trading with India and China immensely.

* “Elles croiseraient autour de nos colonies, autour de ces nouveaux points saisis sur les mers lointaines par une politique prévoyante, et destinés à servir de base à leurs opérations aussi bien qu'à devenir l'asile de nos corsaires.”
—*Prince de Joinville's Pamphlet*, p. 19.

CHAPTER I.

VIEW OF THE MARITIME RESOURCES OF ENGLAND COMPARED
WITH THOSE OF FRANCE. — COMPARISON OF THE “MA-
TERIEL” OF THE TWO NAVIES.

LET any person stand on London bridge and look upon that dense mass of shipping, which, far as the eye can reach, and in number that defies any attempt at counting or even at guessing, covers the water. Let him then embark and thread his way through the narrow passage that intersects this floating forest, and trace it through its miles of length; let him cast his eye beyond it on the right bank, and on the left, and trace, by the masts showing above the houses, those vast artificial basins and canals, covering hundreds of acres, which receive the surplus shipping of the over-crowded river. Let him look at the building yards, public and private, on either side, in which are at this moment building, besides innumerable traders, ships of war, for our own government, for the East India Company, for Spain, Portugal, and other powers. Let him examine (for the dusky unpretending buildings do not strike the eye)

those factories, where scores, nay hundreds, of marine steam-engines are being constructed for Great Britain and the whole world. Let him look at the steamers, varying in size from the frigate to the river-boat, whose paddles, as they pass to and fro, keep the river in endless commotion. Let him then be told that what he sees before him is repeated, though in rather a smaller scale, in the Mersey and the Clyde. Let, I say, any person gaze at this scene, and he will see before him the rough materials, the unorganised resources in *personnel* and *matériel*, of such a navy as the world has not yet seen: and resources, let it be remembered, which are only the natural emanations and exponents of our manufacturing wealth, which wealth is again the natural and spontaneous growth of our mineral riches in coals and iron and the native industry of the people. Will not the person gazing on this scene, whatever be his nation, say of England, "Here is a country destined to be the first maritime power of the globe?"

Let the same person, again following the course of the crowded river, which bears on its surface the wealth of every climate, pass through the scarcely less crowded Downs, and steer a south-westerly course until the ever-moving scene, studded with endless sails, grows less and

less animated as he draws near the coast of France. His approach to that shore will be indicated by the gradual decrease in the number of sails visible. Steamers, with their long trains of smoke, will no longer obscure the atmosphere. The small coasters and fishing-boats will be not only less numerous but less "shipshape" in the cut and setting of the sails. Yachts will disappear; smart looking galleys will be replaced by clumsy boats with primitive oars. In short, he will observe, although a landsman, an unmistakable difference, a perfect contrast between the two shores.

Perhaps, indeed, he will enter a tolerably filled harbour; but of the shipping present, a large part will be under the British or other foreign flags, and of that which is national no small part will be found to trade, not in the usual way of commerce, but upon the bounty or special immunities granted by government. Building yards there will be too, but on a far different scale from those on the Thames. No ships of a thousand tons and upwards, such as those built at Blackwall and elsewhere, will excite his admiration by their noble proportions and the beauty of their lines. A few steamers with, perhaps, English engines. One or two small factories, for machines of trifling power,

will make up the display of commercial activity and power, on the other side of the Channel; and even of this, let me repeat, much is forced and artificial.

Such then is, I believe, a correct view of the maritime resources of the two countries. If I have exaggerated our own, it has been unintentionally, for it is not my wish to strengthen that dangerous over-confidence, which naturally, and almost necessarily, arises out of our past history. I have only dwelt on the fact of such superiority, to place in the strongest light the apparently unaccountable confidence expressed by French professional writers, and generally entertained in France, of the possibility of contending with us successfully, on what we are accustomed to consider as our own element.

But before adducing authority (quite incontestible) for the singular fact, that it is to her *navy*, rather than her army, France looks for future success, I must say something of the organised naval resources, on the national fleets of the two countries.

Looking first at the *matériel* of the two navies, though we shall not find the same overwhelming superiority, which has been observed in our commercial resources, yet it may be asserted that our own force about doubles that

of France ; and when we consider that over and above our royal arsenals, we have in private building-yards alone, the power of building a very large fleet in a few months, this preponderance in *matériel* will be thought fully sufficient. If we look at the quality as well as the number of our ships, it will not be disputed, that there never was a time when England possessed such fine ones as at this moment. The wretched classes of nineties, ninety-eights, and of fifty and sixty-four gunships on two decks—line-of-battle ships in name, without the power of a frigate—have disappeared from the list. The twenty-eight gun, or “donkey-frigate,” so called because they bore the same affinity to a real frigate as a donkey does to a horse, have also been swept away. The dangerous small craft known as “floating coffins,” vessels that could neither fight nor run away, have given place to corvettes and brigs, which even the adversaries of the present surveyor of the navy admit to be excellent. Very possibly the new line-of-battle ships of his construction do not unite every good quality ; they may be uneasy in a sea-way, but, at least, they sail well, have fine roomy quarters, and stand up well under their canvass in smooth water.

When we come to steamers, it will be found

that Government have not been insensible to the vital importance of this new arm. Naval architects, eminent for their talent and success, were allowed a fair field for competition, whether already in the public service or in private establishments. While every building-slip in her Majesty's yards was occupied, orders were also given to private ship-builders in the Thames, Mersey, Clyde, and Isle of Wight. Never before were such exertions made in peace time, and never were they more politic or necessary. France has been unusually active. It was the official recommendation of the committee on the naval estimates in 1842, to make steam-power compensate for the superiority of England in sailing-ships:—"One power has undoubtedly a larger force of sailing-ships; but this inequality must be compensated by the steam force which the genius and patriotism of France may and must create."

Unless the acquiescence of England was here assumed, the avowal of an intention to out-build us in steamers would seem to betray much ignorance of our resources. There is no point on which our superiority is so great, so unquestionable, as in the power of constructing both ships and their engines. We have furnished the latter to half the world, (including several to France

herself,) and should the demand be doubled, there is no reason to doubt the supply keeping pace with it.

It was in our power, then, peacefully, yet effectually, to have demonstrated the hopelessness of such rivalry, and probably, by so doing, to have strangled in its cradle the steam force, so publicly announced as the future creation of "French genius and patriotism." As it was, however, eighteen huge steam frigates, under the guise of Trans-Atlantic packets, to carry the imaginary correspondence of a peddling commerce, were ordered. Those in England who know the history of *our* West India steam packets will appreciate the hopefulness of the French scheme in a commercial point of view. At the same time (and while we had no steamer above 320 horse power) twenty steam frigates of from 450 to 540 horse-power were ordered to be built in France. This would have given her a great preponderance of force; but the Trans-Atlantic steamers, according to the Prince de Joinville*, did not prove suitable for war; and the other steamers, built expressly for that purpose, were not considered very satisfactory.

* Whether the Prince correctly describes the steamers of his own country or not, he fell into great errors respecting ours, and all on the side of addition.

The French naval estimates of 1846, as elsewhere noticed, provide for an enormous increase of steam force. In the mean time, it is less than that of England; and the French resources for constructing steamers out of all proportion inferior. I have already stated, the total of the French navy in ships at about half our own, as a comparison of the two navy lists, which are accessible to every one, will show. There is reason to think that her arsenals, also, are less abundantly supplied.

CHAP. II.

FRENCHMEN GENERALLY, NOTWITHSTANDING THE PRESENT INFERIORITY OF THEIR NAVY, LOOK TO THAT SERVICE RATHER THAN THE ARMY FOR FUTURE SUCCESSES. — THEIR REASONS FOR DOING SO WORTH INVESTIGATION. — THE THREE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE CONFIDENCE OF FRANCE IN HER NAVY RESTS.

SUCH, then, being the material state of the two Navies, it will not be thought the comparison is very encouraging to France; still less will it be supposed, in England at least, that past recollections supply her with the arguments of future confidence. Yet I shall show, that the anticipations of future success by sea terminating in the invasion of England are very generally entertained in France, and believed by Frenchmen to be attainable by their own exertions; or, as M. Thiers* says in his history, — “dependent on the patriotism of France.”

* Le rôle de la navigation à vapeur est impossible à prédire aujourd’hui dans les événements futurs. Qu’elle donne des forces de plus à la France contre l’Angleterre; cela est probable. Qu’elle rende le détroit plus facile à traverser; cela dépendra des efforts que la France saura faire pour s’assurer la supériorité dans l’emploi de cette puissance toute nouvelle; cela dépendra de son patriotisme et de sa prévoyance. (Thiers,

If such a belief on the part of our neighbours should appear too preposterous to be worth attention, let us remember that no national belief is entirely without foundation. Vanity may, and no doubt often does greatly exaggerate a people's belief in their own prowess, but, considered abstractedly, it is at least as probable that a country which for ages has been successful against every rival should be over-confident, as that another without any such dazzling recollections should, without a cause, suddenly hope, against all history, and against, apparently, very fearful odds. It is often the strongest fortress which is taken by surprise and that, usually, on its strongest side. The impregnable Gibraltar, even, was lately discovered to have *one* point so weak as to require instant attention,

vol. v. pp. 467-8.) There is no part of M. Thiers' work more interesting to an Englishman than his full and in many cases perfectly new details of Bonaparte's project of invasion. The sincerity of that project is put beyond a doubt by the tone of several *private* letters, where the expressions of hatred to England are too natural not to be real. Thus when Bonaparte tells Ganteaume "*partez et venez ici. Nous aurons vengé six siècles d'insultes et de honte,*" we trace the anti-English feeling of the *adopted* Frenchman, combined with an avowal of past defeat which no *born* Frenchman would have made. Upon the whole no combination of Bonaparte's seems to have been more *admirable* than his naval ones of 1804-5.

and some thousands of pounds have just been expended on it. May there not be a hole somewhere in our wooden walls? a weak point; a flaw, imperceptible, indeed, to our peaceful and confiding good-nature, but yet discoverable by the keen eye of enmity, sharpened by envy, by the memory of past humiliations, and by the desire of that banquet of the Gods, revenge? Would it be a new thing in the history of the world if some chronicler of the 22d century should write:—"The long immunity from defeat which England had enjoyed, and the incontestable supremacy which her fleets had achieved over those of all Europe, when banded together under Napoleon, seems to have lulled the vigilance of a people more inclined to the arts of peace than the alarms of war. The government, so far, indeed, as the popular institutions, feelings, and traditions of the country allowed, seems to have discharged their duty zealously; but, while they preserved and augmented the *matériel* of the navy, they either deferred the consideration of how the fleet was to be manned, or, perhaps, trusted to the ancient method of impressment." Would such reasoning seem insufficient, and might it not continue thus?—"The seamen raised by this method were, of course, at first as unfit for the military duties of

a sailor, and as little available for directing the powerful ordnance committed to their charge, as a peasant taken from the plough-tail would have been for the manœuvres of the artillery."

"Neither is it wonderful, when we consider the comparative civilisation of the 19th century, and the progress which civil and personal liberty had then made, that men so seized upon and dragged away from their families should, when hurried into desperate conflict with the" &c.

"As to the much-debated point how far — was justified in this sudden onset, which proved so" &c.

"It must in the next place be remembered that precedents of the kind were not wanting in the history of England. It seems, indeed, to have been the practice with that once haughty power, previous to any declaration of war."

"But the most singular feature in the whole case is the unaccountable reliance of the British people in the pacific intentions of France when the ill-will of the latter people was so palpably evident. Not only do the contemporary papers which were at that time published at — and are now in the museum of Philadelphia, establish," &c.

"This pamphlet, published by one of the sons of the then reigning monarch of France, is an

elaborate essay on the means of ruining England by destroying her commerce and seaport towns. It appears not only to have been published in French, but translated into English. It was followed by many similar pamphlets, and, two years afterwards, by an extraordinary vote of 4,500,000*l.* for carrying its suggestions into effect. Surely, therefore, with these symptoms of the national feeling in France, towards a country which had so signally defeated her in war, England should have," &c.

Such we can conceive to be the *ex post facto* reasoning of an historian who should look with the impartial eye of posterity upon that period which is to us the impenetrable future. We must draw our conclusions as we best can, and, since there is no doubt that our national self-love will sufficiently portray our strength and power, let us take counsel of our enemies as to our weakness, and their hopes of success; for it is certain they have more attentively considered the means of *repairing defeat* than *we* have the means of *retaining our superiority*.

Though the following is extracted from the French Journals, whose boasts and calumnies are alike disregarded in England, yet, as it embodies what has been written on the question by better authorities, it may be taken as a fair

exposition of French views. The reader must be reminded that the Prince de Joinville, in his publication here alluded to, though assuming the destruction of the British Mediterranean fleet in 1840, (an event which all Frenchmen consider must have resulted from a conflict,) argued that such a success would have been but temporary, from the want of any reserved force. The Prince argues for a war, chiefly directed against our commerce, and for *razzias* upon our coast. This view is not universally popular in France, where the young generation look for a somewhat higher *rôle* for their navy, and hence many pamphlets, and some sharp controversy in their professional works. The opinion of the *great-war* party, as opposed to the advocates of a war more lucrative than chivalrous, may be gathered from the following extract from *Le National*:—"We admit that we could not send forty sail of the line into the Channel, but we could send twenty-four, which would be better than the forty of former times, and *that* before two months, and before England could assemble an equal number, because the security inspired by her numerous resources has caused her to forget to organise those resources, and because, by her own admission, the mode of impressment is an odious means of raising seamen. We have seen,

and we still see, that in England it requires some months to procure a sufficient number of hands to fit out a few ships, not for an engagement, but merely for a cruise.* We therefore contend, that twenty-four ships, hastily collected together in the Channel, might very easily intercept the communications, prevent the junction of the vessels scattered in different ports, burn some dock-yards, destroy some arsenals, and even favour a landing, which would produce the greater effect because it would not have been previously announced. The cannoniers who served our guns in 1840 have not forgotten their trade. A war therefore, suddenly commenced, conducted with prudence and skill, and carried on with vigour, would give us good hopes of success. But even omitting the invasion, which itself alone would terminate all, and which striking England in the heart, would cause her to descend to the rank of a third-rate power, even omitting that, let us argue on the consequences of a maritime war. Our seamen, let it be remembered, have not forgotten their brilliant triumphs. Neither have they forgotten their glorious defeats, nor the circumstances which led to them. These circumstances, which exist no longer, are well known to them, and we shall

* This is too true.

see whether they have nourished in vain in their hearts a hatred of England."

Putting aside the boasting by which Frenchmen always weaken their own arguments, and often sacrifice the credit they are entitled to; it will be seen that there are *three grounds* here assigned for the confidence expressed : —

1ST. THE CHANCE OF COMMENCING A WAR
"SUDDENLY."

2ND. THE DIFFICULTY ENGLAND WOULD EXPERIENCE IN MANNING HER FLEET, HAVING NEGLECTED TO "ORGANISE HER RESOURCES."

3RDLY. THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE FRENCH NAVY IN DISCIPLINE, SKILL, AND GUNNERY. A POINT ON WHICH I SUSPECT WE ARE TOO INCREDULOUS, AND ON WHICH MUCH MUST DEPEND.

I do not include the grand and decisive "invasion," as it must be the consequence of success and not the cause. It is also too like selling the lion's skin before his death.

CHAP. III.

**THE FIRST GROUND ON WHICH FRENCHMEN REST THEIR
HOPES OF NAVAL SUCCESS. — ITS REASONABLENESS.**

LET us then examine these three grounds; and first, as to the war “suddenly commenced,” which the French writer recommends, and which nine-tenths of France would sanction.

Some years ago, the peace-loving subjects of Queen Victoria had persuaded themselves that wars between civilised countries were no longer possible. According to them, the Political Millenium had already commenced, and all future misunderstandings were to be adjusted without appealing to that barbarous umpire the sword. We had, in this, carried the principle of judging others by ourselves rather too far, not exactly considering whether other nations had the same grounds for satisfaction with the *statu quo* as ourselves. Some very startling events however, and a prodigious clashing of angry tongues across the Channel, dispelled the pleasing dream. We were forced to admit that future wars were possible, nay, far from improbable, and government knowing that when

war *did* come it would be the war of giants, a war wherein not single ships but fleets would disappear before the destructive weapons and deadly aim of modern art, took their measures accordingly. Besides a great addition to our existing force in *matériel* the means of future construction and repair on a scale quite new to the world have been planned and are now in progress. The old dock-yards are being enlarged, new slips* constructed, steam-basins (compared to which it would be a pardonable hyperbole to call our present ones wash-hand basins) contracted for, and, in short, preparations are making for another war of twenty years' duration, and twenty times the intensity of the last. In sight of these preparations, counselled by prudence, and sanctioned by public opinion, all faith in the golden age vanished, or sought refuge in the bosom of the "Universal peace preservation society."

But it is natural to man to hug some fond delusion. We assured ourselves that *in our days* ample warning would always be given before the sword was drawn, and that, though steam had made harbours of refuge for our merchant-ships, fortifications for our seaports, and some

* Slips are the places on which ships are built.

land forces in case of reverse necessary, we might indefinitely postpone such matters. Yet the different events which nearly led to war lately came upon us suddenly enough, and *might*, I apprehend, have come in a shape admitting of no pacific adjustment.

In the case of M'Leod, for instance, a man whose existence was unknown in England until it was found to be in jeopardy in the hands of the notorious Judge Lynch, the question of peace or war might have been decided by a lawless mob upon the pot-house boasting of an obscure Canadian.

In the more recent case of the Tahiti affair circumstances as little under the control of government as the winds themselves very nearly embroiled us in a deadly war. A *living* missionary may be *compensated*, but what if *his life* had been taken in prison by the French officer who threatened it? Nothing short of the trial (and execution if found guilty) of the offender would have satisfied the justice of the case, or the indignation of England. Would such justice have been done?

Both these events came upon us quite suddenly, though, fortunately, without the circumstances which might have made an irremediable *casus belli*. They were, however, "very

pretty quarrels as they stood," and might have been worse. How much of diplomatic form and correspondence must now intervene before the pen is laid aside and the sword called in, I am not qualified to judge; but, in past times, the point seems to have been regulated mainly by the convenience of the strongest and best-prepared party. In those remote ages between 1800 and 1815 there is more than one instance of what Sir Lucius O'Trigger would call a "civil question" being asked by one power of another, the diplomatic demand being accompanied by a fleet or army as interpreter. It suits the purpose of French calumniators to assert that such proceedings were characteristic of British diplomacy, or, as those brawlers phrase it, British perfidy. But the fact is, if we were as bad, we certainly were not worse than our neighbours, and our acts, though not, as I conceive, to be justified, had the palliation of being provoked by the compulsory hostility which the unhappy countries under the iron despotism of Bonaparte showed us.

The "untoward event" of 1827 was an instance of this summary diplomacy on the part of the strong against the weak. In 1840, if we may accept the testimony of M. Thiers against himself, poor Spain was nearer than she dreamed

being punished for the crime of — weakness. That very unscrupulous little statesman, in explaining the advice he had given to his sovereign, declared that his first step would have been to seize upon Minorca. (A French hospital and coal depôt had been established there already—*of course* without any reference to such a design. Yet the miraculous capture of San Sebastian and Pamplona, in 1807–8, might have suggested some strange association of ideas.) The French papers did not mention that the orator blushed through his spectacles; nor, indeed, do they record the storm of disapprobation, which must, no doubt, have attended the unprincipled avowal. Yet not unprincipled in *him*, for it squares perfectly with the political views put forth in his history—history in the sense which Charles V. attached to the word?

Nor was Spain the only power in danger of a sudden rupture in that year. We have it on the high scientific authority of M. Arago, deputy and philosopher (those French philosophers are as bellicose as ours are pacific,—let Mr. Buckingham look to it at his “Institute”), that the guns of the French fleet would have gone off by themselves “*partis tous seuls*,” if not wisely removed from the Levant. If M. Arago means, that they would have done so in the *latter* part of

1840, such a spontaneous explosion would have been very imprudent on the part of the French guns, and likely to lead to consequences, more in conformity with the tenour of past history than the boasts of French orators. But it is certain that, in 1839, and until late in 1840, there were many letters from the French fleet, published by the "Sentinelle de Toulon," "Semaphore de Marseilles," &c., in which the writers speculated on "the case of collision" with great complacency. As our ships at that time had very reduced complements, and were chiefly small seventy-two's, while the French squadron was more numerous, and composed of their largest ships on the war establishment, such complacency was very pardonable: I shall show hereafter, that no pains whatever were spared to ensure a favourable result. This would have been the time for a "war suddenly commenced and carried on with prudence and vigour;" and looking back at the circumstances of the case, it seems very probable that such was the intention of M. Thiers. An attack on the English fleet would have been less dishonourable than the surprise of Minorca, the territory of a power whose weakness and abstinence from all interference in the Eastern question should have protected her. There was something too in the

systematic reinforcement of the French fleet, so as to keep it on a footing of greater strength than our own, which impressed both men and officers in our fleet with the idea of some secret design. It is curious how little the public press of England took notice of what formed the staple conversation of the two fleets, which at that time "looked not lovingly" on each other, and to one of which, at least, the smoke of a distant steamer seemed a signal pregnant with the fate of hundreds.* Our sailors at that time were better interpreters of the future than our journalists, usually so well informed. Jack would express his belief to Bill, that "there is going to be a shindy," while Bill would gravely reply, "I shouldn't wonder but there'll be a scrimmage." Yet I cannot believe that the British press, who had then, as at all times of interest, intelligent correspondents on the spot, was really in ignorance. I believe they were then, as now, shutting their eyes to the possibility of war, because they wished not to see it. If such was their policy, it acted most

* A letter published in the French papers from an officer of their Mediterranean fleet, described the excitement which the distant smoke of a steamer produced ; it being uncertain how far the designs of M. Thiers at that time went. There is reason to think that Admiral Lalande had *conditional* orders as to attacking our fleet.

injuriously and unfairly towards the government of the day ; for the country, kept quite in the dark, as to the insolent pretensions of M. Thiers to dictate to all Europe, were suddenly informed of the treaty of July ; and taking, as we are too apt to do, the version of the most noisy as the true one, many people imagined that France was ill used. Yet what was the whole affair, stripped of diplomatic mystery ? It was a question in which five powers being interested, four thought one way, and France happening to think the other, determined to bully the rest into acquiescence. The idea of such dictation exactly suited the taste of the Parisians, who not foreseeing the issue, pleased themselves with caricatures * of a four-headed monster suddenly stopped by a *garde nationale*, who, with levelled musket, calls out "*à moi la France !*" Was it to be expected that England, sympathised with by all Europe, was to retreat before the vulgar arrogance of M. Thiers ? That such a statesman should attempt to bully, and, failing in that, have recourse to the intrigue, which the Duc de Valmy † since exposed, is conceivable ; but, at

* Such caricatures were exhibited in Paris in 1840, *previous to Acre*.

† See Quarterly Review, No. 133. for Dec. 1840.

first sight, it will appear strange that he should, on a question where he could only defeat England by a victory over her fleet, have looked for success. Did he, as well as the French naval officers and the Prince de Joinville, think victory probable? If so, was his information received through the proper channel, the Admiral Lalande? (And an officer better qualified to give an opinion, France did not possess.) This is a question of some interest. My present object is to show that in 1840 we were nearer a war, or at least a battle, than people generally supposed. The character of the existing French ministry is a better guarantee against such *coups de mains*, yet circumstances may happen—nay, they *may already have happened*—which, in the present temper of the French mind, would make peace impossible. The ship may now be on its way—may be already in port—which bears intelligence of something more than “eccentricity”* in some French officers. It is within the bounds of probability that some English commander “ordered away” from some French port in “Oceanie,” as having “no mission” there, may have felt justified in refusing to stir. In such case a

* The term applied by the Duke of Wellington to the strange proceedings in Tahiti.

French officer, sure of public sympathy at least, at home, would, if he felt himself strong enough, resort to hostilities. Now, whatever the result, we may doubt whether any government could resist the war-cry, which would resound through France.

Causes of offence will not be wanting where the desire to quarrel exists; and knowing as we do the readiness of French officers to imagine a slight where none is meant, it should never astonish us to hear of a collision with French ships. But if this be possible elsewhere: on the coast of Africa, I should think it all but certain. Something in the climate acting on the temper seems to be wonderfully prolific of quarrels, even among our own officers. But the French coming to a station so abhorrent to all their tastes, and suffering privations they are little accustomed to, will look with anything but friendly feelings upon those of whose humane but somewhat Quixotic policy they are made the unwilling instruments.

Such, then, are some of the causes which have of late nearly brought on war, or which may, in addition to many others, beyond all human foresight, do so hereafter. I mention this merely to show, that the power which is most likely to be the aggressor, has a right to speculate on a "war

suddenly commenced," and that the French writers who reckon on such an event as favourable to their hopes of success have reason to do so. Of the three grounds, then, on which French writers build their hopes, the first may, if I am right, be conceded, — a "war suddenly commenced" seems to be possible.

CHAP. IV.

THE SECOND GROUND ON WHICH FRENCHMEN REST THEIR
HOPE OF NAVAL SUCCESSES, CONSIDERED.

THE next ground on which French writers, and we may suppose Frenchmen generally, build their hopes is :

“ The difficulty which England would experience in manning her fleet, having neglected to organise her resources.”

As this difficulty must, of course, be meant comparatively to what France herself would experience, we shall have to examine the means possessed by both countries in case of need.

It must at once be admitted, that this is our weak point—a weakness not of modern days, nor attributable to this or that ministry, but as old as the Navy itself, and originating in the spirit of our institutions. In no point is the opposite system, or rather genius of the two governments more palpable, than in the minute superintendence of the whole maritime population exercised by the French government, compared with the absolute non-interference of our

own. In the one country, the administrative or *bureaucratic* system is carried to the utmost pitch. In the other, the *laissez-faire* system, or no system, is paramount. In France, the whole commercial navy—masters, mates, sailors, *mousses* even, are under the eye and jurisdiction of the minister of marine. Nay, every fisherman, waterman, ferryman, oyster-dredger, boat-builder, is registered. I doubt whether, had Loch Katrine been in France, the "*Lady of the Lake*" would have escaped the "Inscription Maritime" among the "individues non comprises dans les classes anterieures." At all events, her "skiff" would have duly appeared among the boats or wherries of the 145th class. In England we have lately attempted a "registry of seamen*," an admirable measure, if enforced, and one which, with several others, will ever do credit to Lord Haddington's late administration. But the very limited powers of an English First Lord, compared with the French *Ministre de la Marine et Colonies*, does not afford the same field for improvement. It may here be observed, what a singular contradiction appears in the two countries. In *maritime* England, the First Lord of

* A previous attempt was made by Sir James Graham, but without effect.

the Admiralty is the head of the naval department, with a seat in the cabinet, and no more. In *military* France, the Minister of Marine has, 1st, the Navy; 2d, the Colonies; 3rd, the Administration of the Commercial Marine, with jurisdiction over the several *préfets maritimes* all round the coasts, and through them and the *Directeurs des Mouvements du Port* of the merchant shipping in harbour; 4th, the Fisheries; 5th, the Consular department.

When, therefore, it is considered that colonies, commerce, fisheries, &c. &c. are all made subservient to the French Royal Navy, it will appear less strange that the incomparably smaller maritime resources of that country are yet more available than our vast resources.

The methods by which our fleet can be manned may be stated as follows:—1st, voluntary enlistment, as at present; 2ndly, voluntary enlistment, with the additional inducement of a “bounty;” 3rdly, an embargo on all our merchant shipping, until all the royal fleet is manned;—a method which has been used, and seems an expedient beneficial to the merchant navy until suitably protected, and requisite for the safety of the state; fourthly, *impressment*.

The first method may be considered entirely inapplicable to cases of emergency. There are

no means of calculating how long ships would be manning, if, as would necessarily happen in cases of emergency, their crews were not increased by men recently paid off from other ships. In peace, there are usually as many ships paid off as commissioned in a year, and thus the men who leave one ship join another; but even with this aid, the average of several line-of-battle ships I find to have been five months. In 1835-6, when we commissioned several ships of the line at once, they were, I think, six months waiting for seamen, and were then very ill-manned. I think we may safely suppose, that were ten sail of the line commissioned at this moment, and did circumstances not admit of paying others off, we should not see them manned in less than eight months.* We may therefore say, that for any case of emergency simple volunteering will fail.

The efficiency of the second method, paying a bounty, will of course depend in a great degree upon the amount; and I believe the truest

* This view has just received confirmation from enquiries at Portsmouth. The ships last commissioned are still very short-handed, and the volunteers who present themselves (and *faute de mieux* are received) but indifferent. According to an old seaman's phrase, "any-thing that has legs and arms must do now."

economy in this case would be liberality. In the last war, we were neither liberal nor commonly just to our seamen. Taking advantage of the power to press their services, we actually offered an able seaman less bounty than a marine boy. While the seaman got from 3*l.* to 5*l.*, the boy recruit was at times (see "Admiral Griffiths on Impressment") receiving 12*l.*, and putting the country to a total expence of 16*l.* 14*s.* 6*d.* Grown men in the marines were at the same time receiving 16*l.* for unlimited, and 11*l.* for limited service, the bounty to soldiers of the line being still higher. This was a grievous injustice and oppression, which did not fail to produce its natural consequences in dangerous discontent. An able seaman's services, estimated on commercial principles, and as they *must* have been estimated but for the power of compelling them, are more valuable than a soldier's. The seaman's skill can only be acquired by many years of practice, and never, except in very early life. A recruit taken from the plough is a good soldier in six months.

The third measure mentioned, an embargo on all merchant ships until the fleet was manned, would not be immediately effectual, though an excellent auxiliary measure. Its operation would not be felt until the funds of our sailors were

exhausted, and then it would of course be effectual, for if not employed by merchants, they must necessarily enter in men-of-war. But seamen, above all others of the working classes, are likely to be well provided for a blockade. Unlike the generality of working men, who receive their wages weekly, the seaman gets his whole earnings at the end of his voyage, and usually on his return to England. He is hence in a condition to hold out for some time without employment. Nevertheless, in addition to a liberal bounty, an embargo immediately laid on our whole commercial navy would no doubt be a good measure; but when was England liberal in time, or when did she admit in practice that a timely expenditure is economy in the end?

The last resource, then, and that on which any British government no doubt chiefly relies, is Impressment. As this method has been long tried, and was formerly found tolerably effectual, it is not likely to be abandoned until some other means have been devised, and found to answer. At the same time, while admitting the necessity of *retaining the power*, we should neither shut our eyes to the possibility of its proving less productive in future, nor to the enormous evils which attend it. When sailors were like those amphibious animals, who never quit the imme-

diate vicinity of the water,—when they were always to be found in particular purlieus of seaport towns, and then in a state of helpless intoxication,—when the money which they received to-day was gone to-morrow, and they found themselves without other means of locomotion than their legs,—it was an easy task to lay hands on them; a migration of seamen inland was then scarce possible. Things are changed now, and seamen are not less changed than the rest of the community. The seaman of 1846 (except on the stage) is as different from the seaman of the last war as it is possible to be. He is just as well able to take care of his money and himself as any other individual, and perhaps rather more given to locomotion, and less tied down to a particular residence. That he may be hunted down in the end is probable; but that he will often baffle the press-gang for weeks, is equally so. Yet, suppose him seized upon, dragged on board of a Queen's ship, and told that he must serve his country, we must here again take into our view the change in his character. The seaman of the present day is a well-informed man,—a man by no means insensible to or uninfluenced by that spirit which has pervaded all classes of late years, especially since 1830; I mean that spirit which, diffused by the

press, and helped forward by political events, has made the working classes prone to question authority, and perhaps at times to resist it. Jack is a reader of the *worst* newspapers, because they are the cheapest, and it is reasonable to suppose that his opinions are in some degree formed by them. I have known commanding officers specially to exclude certain newspapers, and even to *confiscate* them when the letter-bags arrived. For my own part, I never interfered, confident that in the present day, at least, a seaman is too sharp-sighted not to know when he is well off, and too sensible to be discontented without a cause. But with a ship's company of *pressed* men, we must return to the obnoxious restrictions and the stern system of repression, alike painful to superiors and subordinates, which prevailed, we know with what results in, 1797-8. This would be the more deplorable, because the general disposition of our seamen at this moment is excellent; and though from inability to procure employment in our own navy, many are now serving under the American flag, we have every reason to believe they would, on the breaking out of a war, demand their discharge.*

* The writer has it on good authority, that at the time of the apprehended war with America, (M'Leod's affair) the captain of the American 60 gun frigate "Potomac," having

I do not think, however, such would be the case if we had recourse to pressing. The late Admiral Griffiths*, who wrote on impressment entirely in the spirit of a seaman, and who was particularly well acquainted with a sailor's views and feelings, gives the strongest grounds for believing that our seamen were driven from their allegiance by the pressing system. Yet he admits the necessity of retaining the power, while he thinks that liberality, or rather justice, in regard to bounty would make its exercise unnecessary. And after all, can it be denied, that it is simple justice to act towards our sailors as we do towards our soldiers in the matter of pecuniary inducements? Is it because we can compel a man to serve that we are to make an iniquitous Jew bargain with him?

To sum up; as our means of manning the fleet in case of emergency, simple volunteering would

assembled his ship's company, and addressed them on the subject of the expected rupture, some two or three hundred sailors stepped forward, and said that *as Englishmen* they would not fight against their country, and desired their discharge.

* Admiral G. says, that at the short peace many seamen emigrated without "setting foot in their own country," and what is still more lamentable, that others went to *France* to assist in fitting out the French fleet at Brest. This latter almost incredible statement he gives p. 30., on the authority of a Lord of the Admiralty.

be ineffectual; a bounty adequate to the purpose, would be a departure from our system of extravagant economy not to be expected. The effect of an embargo would be but slow in appearing; impressment would perhaps produce seamen; but seamen, be it remembered, who, were their inclinations as good, as we may fear they would be bad, would still have all their military duties to learn; men who would bear the same analogy to a man-of-war's-man that a peasant does to a soldier; men who would work a gun as an Esquimaux might; who would handle a musket "like a cow," and a sword as they would a flail;—such is, I believe, a true picture of the country, whose unbounded maritime resources have (no uncommon result of affluence) the effect of preventing their proper application.

In turning to France, we find a contrast as to organization, not less than was before described to natural resources, if that is admissible. France has nominally a third part* of the number of the seamen possessed by England, though I confess my doubts whether of real seamen she

* By the last official report, France has 125,272 names on the *Inscription Maritime*. Excluding workmen in the dock-yards, masters of vessels, and pilots, 101,306, of whom 20,930 are apprentices, and 15,430 *mousses* or young boys.

has half that proportion even, but of the 101,306 men enrolled in the *inscription maritime*, every man not abroad is at once available. France, as mentioned before, by placing her whole commercial navy under the minister of marine, and extending his jurisdiction over every coast and colony which owns her sway, has directed to one object the entire maritime resources of the kingdom. The coast of France is divided into five *arrondissements*, Cherbourg, Brest, Lorient, Rochefort, and Toulon*, over each a flag-officer presides with the title of *prefet maritime*, and his authority extends equally over the commercial ports of his district. At such ports as Havre, Nants, Bordeaux, &c., a commissary-general with a *directeur des mouvements du ports* and five or six officers of the commissariat, charged with the details of the *inscription maritime*, are stationed. The principal care of the minister of marine is to regulate every branch of French navigation in the way

* I may add, to show to what minute details the French Government (not unwisely) descends, there is a library and librarian at each port accessible to every seaman. One object of this is to create an *esprit de corps*. And I will venture to say French seamen know more of the imaginary triumphs of their own navy than ours do of the lives of Hawke, Boscawen, Howe, Duncan, &c.

most conducive to the encouragement of native seamen; and to effect this regulation decrees and *ordonnances* innumerable are issued all through the year. I believe that if it occurred to His Excellency to apply for an *arrêt*, commanding all Frenchmen to live on oysters for the promotion of that fishery, we should see one to that effect duly expedited. To form an idea of the activity of the marine department, we need only look at the *Partie Officielle* of the *Annales Maritimes*, a large octavo published monthly. Assuredly M. le Ministre is not asleep. I do not pretend to say whether all this regulation is beneficial to the permanent interests of French commerce. An Englishman will incline to think (especially if a free trader) that the French commercial navy is too much be-governed in defiance of the advice given to the wisest of French ministers by a merchant, "*Laissez nous faire.*" But M. Charles Dupin, who is a high authority on these matters, thinks that more regulation is wanting. My object is only to show, that with a whole system devised for the purpose, it is not an incredible assertion that France has her small resources in a more available state than England. It is not, however, to the *inscription maritime*, which includes the

seafaring population, nor the conscription*, which gives to the French navy its proportion of the inland population, that France entirely trusts. Knowing the value of the first blow, they are making every arrangement with that view. She has established a permanent force of seamen under the name of *compagnies permanentes d'équipage de ligne*, who, when not embarked, remain in barracks. These companies of *trained* seamen can be embarked at an hour's notice, and either for the whole crews of a lesser or the nucleus of a larger number of ships. I cannot speak with certainty as to the number of seamen so prepared at present, having lost the extract I made, but I feel nearly confident that the established number is sufficient for sixteen sail of the line.

By a recent *ordonnance*, intended to keep a powerful reserve in constant readiness at a small expence, a new state of equipment has been decreed, called *disponibilité de rade*. In this state the ships have their guns and least perishable stores on board. They are commanded by an officer, next in rank below that to which the

* This conscription is the general levy of recruits throughout the kingdom, a proportion of which goes to the navy. Thus in 1843 out of a total of 80,000 men, 4040 conscripts were allotted to the navy, and distributed among the *équipes de ligne*, the marine infantry and marine artillery.

command at sea would belong, and a certain number of seamen belonging to the *compagnies permanentes* are embarked. Among other objects of this *ordonnance* is one thus expressed: "Beyond the foregoing arrangements, the project has for its object to effect an important change. The quartering of the ships' companies on shore or in vessels moored to the shore, gives rise to some serious evils. The new system, which enables the recruits to be at once embarked, and thus familiarised with a sea life and its duties, will at once remedy them (these evils)," &c. This appears to be a great improvement, and gives to France a reserved force very different from what we call "advanced ships." With *us*, the delay is in getting *men*; and it is scarce an exaggeration to say, we might build a ship in the time required to *man her*. Of course it is proper to have a certain number of ships complete as to *matériel* (exclusive of perishable stores); but we should greatly deceive ourselves if we imagined that our "advanced ships," without a reserve of seamen, or the means of getting them in haste, were any equivalent for the efficient reserve force of our neighbours.

Whether the French system is better than our own,* or why the policy of France requires a

* A friend suggested to the writer that the mere registra-

state of greater preparation, and a larger peace establishment than our own, is not the question here. *It is her policy and her practice in peace, to reverse the relative position of the two countries in war,* (in European seas at least,) and to make up, by the availableness and organisation of her resources, what they want in extent. In doing so, she adopts the recommendation of the Prince de Joinville*, and all other French naval writers who dwell upon the importance of striking a heavy blow at the commercial credit and resources of England in the *very beginning of a war*. The recent demand (extraordinary in every sense) of five millions sterling†, by the French minister of marine, about which some of our

tion of seamen in France, does not *secure* their services. It is to be observed, that the French system goes far beyond registration. A *legal* liability to serve the state, and a permanent *surveillance* by Government, is a *tie* upon the merchant seamen of practical value.

* La leçon ne doit pas être perdue aujourd'hui pour nous, et nous devons nous mettre en état au premier coup de canon qui sera tirée d'agir assez puissamment contre le commerce Anglais pour ébranler sa confiance. Or ce but la France l'atteindra en établissant sur tous les points du globe des croisières habilement distribuées. — *Prince de Joinville's Pamphlet.*

† The French papers agree in estimating the *whole* sum voted at 135,000,000 francs ; besides the *ordinary* votes. At p. 5. I have called this vote *four* millions (93,000,000 francs), *excluding* the annual credit of 6,000,000 francs for seven years.

newspapers took unnecessary pains to find apologies, is another giant step in the same direction. It is quite an error, as indeed M. de Mackau himself explained, to suppose that this sum must be distributed over seven years. It is a vote authorising the minister to expend five millions beyond the five millions of ordinary expenses ; and with this sum, or credit in hand, were war certain on the first of next month, he would not have to apply to the Chambers for one additional *centime*. It is, in fact, furnishing beforehand the sinews of war, and would in England be considered to indicate its near approach. Equally erroneous is it to suppose, that this credit will only raise the French navy to the force decided on in 1837 and 1842. Though one part of the minister's statement (for he had both to address the zealots for war, and, indirectly, the foreign powers) seems to assert this, the other part directly contradicts it. But the question is fairly set at rest by the "Journal des Debats," a paper well known to speak the sentiments of the ministry, and the only French paper which enjoys any reputation or credit in England. The "Debats" frankly admits that the pretext of putting the navy on the footing decreed in 1837 and 1842 is untrue ; for it says, " At present the question is not with respect to a simple vote of some supplementary credits to place our

supplies in harmony with the naval establishments fixed by the ordonnance of the 1st of February, 1837, and the royal decision of the 4th of May, 1842,—IT IS THE RE-CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROYAL NAVY ON A LARGER BASIS* :” and a few lines farther on it lets the secret out, by informing us *who* devised the scheme of 1846, (which, indeed, ought not to be new to us)—“ These new modifications are due to the Superior Central Commission, of which the proceedings were in a great measure directed by the PRINCE DE JOINVILLE.” Exactly so: in 1844 the royal admiral, who may be supposed most intimate with the thoughts of his sovereign, describes the organisation which should be given to the French navy to make it most formidable to England. Had that Note been immediately followed by a demand of four millions sterling to carry out its views, we should (for twenty-four hours, perhaps,) have regarded it as a serious matter. But coming out in the year 1846, when the Prince’s pamphlet is half forgotten, people see no connection between its hostile suggestions and the report of the minister. This, however, is not the place to discuss this entirely unprece-

* The basis is indeed new and formidable; sixty-six heavy frigates, (all under forty-four guns are called corvettes in France,) and thirty large steam frigates.

dented *peace-time measure* of our neighbours. It is only as augmenting the power of France to equip her fleets speedily, that I have here introduced the subject, and in this point of view it must be regarded as conferring a power never accorded by a British parliament except on the eve of war.

From what has been written above, in elucidation of the footing upon which the peace establishments of England and France are at present placed, I think it may be inferred, that French writers are correct in supposing that within certain limits, as to number, a French fleet would be at sea before an English one. If so, then, of three grounds upon which Frenchmen trust as to future success at sea, two may be granted them.

1st. France (who is most likely to verify her own expectation) may reckon upon the sudden and opportune termination of peace, some day or other, as a sufficiently probable event.

2d. She may, with some degree of probability, reckon upon the comparative ease with which she would man her fleet; for without granting it, in a sense reflecting blame on any one, yet as a *fact*, we may allow that England, "relying on her vast resources, has neglected to organise them."

CHAP. V.

THE THIRD AND LAST GROUND OF THE CONFIDENCE ENTERTAINED BY FRANCE IN THE FUTURE OF HER NAVY.

WE now come to the last French position, and that which will in England, generally, be received with more than mere denial, with something approaching to contempt—THAT THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE FRENCH NAVY IN DISCIPLINE, SKILL, AND GUNNERY, WILL GIVE THEM AN ADVANTAGE OVER US IN FUTURE COMBATS.

It is proper here to quote French authority for their own belief; and although there is difficulty in selecting in so great a number of witnesses, I shall give the preference to his R. H. the Prince de Joinville, not on account of his rank alone, but on account of the moderation of his opinions, unaccompanied by the monstrous perversion of past history which deprives French writers of any weight in England. His R. H. incidentally, and in the course of an argument, not meant to exalt his own profession, says, "We had at that moment * the advantage over the British squadron in organisation and in

* In 1840.

numbers. Our sailors, commanded by an able and active chief, were well exercised, and all promised a victory. I do not here rely on my own recollection, but upon that of one of the most skilful officers in the British navy.”*

Here, in common with all French writers, and, we must suppose, in common with the minister of the day, whose instructions rendered a collision probable, the prince takes the defeat of the English fleet as certain ; a certainty arising partly from their superior numbers, and in part from superior organisation. But the prince, addressing himself to a public most willing to take the prowess of their countrymen for granted, is content to express his own opinion. He neither supports it by history travestied, nor by boasts : not so, however, his opponents. A French writer of a pamphlet, in answer to the prince, goes much farther ; he assumes not only the first victory in the *quasi* war of 1840, but a repetition of such result every time the English ventured to try their fortune. “It was upon seeing the gunners trained by Admiral Lalande that we perceived, for the first time, all the advantage which the French navy would derive from the incontestable

* Prince de Joinville, “Sur l’Etat,” &c. &c. Fr. edition, p. 9.

superiority of her artillery. The guns would have gone off of themselves in 1840, said M. Arago. We may add, that they would have kept up a running fire, before which all must have succumbed. The captains of guns in the flag-ship had attained to such a pitch of perfection, as to fire in two minutes and a half, or three minutes at the most, the six* prescribed rounds with shot, and to strike a target representing a line-of-battle ship, two hundred and sixty times at two or three cables' length. There was not a shot that would not have told. The other gunners were also very expert. We may judge from the notes of Vice Admiral Missiessy on the naval gunnery of the emperor's time, that they were at least equal, if not superior, to the gunners of the 'Redoubtable' seventy-four, who at Trafalgar, as we know (?), so completely subdued the fire of the hundred-and-twenty gun ship bearing Nelson's flag, that the batteries were for a time deserted. It would not have been the fault of the gunners trained in our school-frigates, and brought to perfection by Admiral Lalande, if this feat had not been repeated on a large scale in 1840; and it *would* have been so repeated

* This implies a larger allowance of exercising ammunition than our service affords.

every time the English squadron thought fit to try. For if England be the country of good sailors, France alone can produce men capable of using ordnance properly, and pointing it in the twinkling of an eye.”*

Here again we find a French writer upsetting his own argument by boasts which, if well founded, would make history a succession of miracles. It must not, however, be supposed that the whole of M. L’Espinasse’s pamphlet is in this strain: it is, generally speaking, well written, and, except a soreness in speaking of English victories, which betrays him into folly, is well worth reading. If his confidence in future success betrays vanity, yet it is a vanity pervading the whole French nation; a vanity which, however we may smile, does not all evaporate in abuse and gasconade, but produces, *inter alia*, the palpable result of an extraordinary vote of four millions, and, which the day we least expect it —; but that is in the womb of time.

It is surely then worth our while to trace the origin and history of this belief, all vain: though it may be, and assuming, as we safely may, that it has not its origin in history, as *acted*:

* “Considerations sur les Vaisseaux et les Vapeurs, par le M. L’Espinasse,” November, 1844.

or even written before 1830, to discover its rise and progress.

As all excellence, naval or other, is comparative, and as the French navy might take the lead, owing to the depreciation of other navies as well as to its own improvement, it will not be amiss to mention here that our own navy, which, to an English landsman's imagination, always remains "our glorious navy," varies immensely in the scale of efficiency. It would perhaps be useless here to insinuate a doubt that at its lowest ebb it is still the first of navies. But it has, in fact, *at times*, been all one could desire, and at other times not much to be proud of. In *matériel* the improvement has been progressive; but the *personnel* and *morale* of the small force, which, in peace time, represents the British navy, and which we occasionally, when seized with economical fits, reduce to a shadow and a show, have been subject to great variations. It is certainly not foreign to the purpose, to keep this in mind when we trace the progress of a rival navy from the dejection and despondency of 1814-15 to the towering hopes of 1846, from the time when it was seriously debated whether France ought to keep up a navy at all, to the time when both government and people seem to think no sacri-

fices too great to make that same navy preponderant.

There is an idea prevalent with *La jeune France*, that there was a time when their own navy held the first position, and was constantly successful. Like many others in fabulous history, this epoch is of uncertain date, some assigning it to the reign of Louis the XIV., some to that of Louis the XV., and others to that of Louis the XVI. The first of these eras, however, has the best claim; for whereas the two latter produced nothing but bulletins, the victories of Louis the XIV., though achieved by an overwhelming force, did at least produce some material proofs of success.* This reign has accordingly been selected by M. E. Sue for the beginning and end of his French Naval History, and by a method somewhat peculiar, he makes out a very good case. By suppressing the *unessential* fact of the French force having been on one occasion double, and on the other triple their opponents, M. Sue concludes his naval history with two *combats magnifiques*, where the English are defeated by a

* In 1706-7 the French under MM. Forbin and Duguay Trouin obtained two victories. In the first, the British force was three ships to ten French. In the last, five British to twelve French. M. E. Sue calls them "combats magnifiques."

French force, which we may suppose to have been inferior, equal, or superior, as we please, but which the annexed plates would rather intimate was *not* superior. If M. Sue means that any victory over an English force, however inferior, is *magnifique*, we may thank him for the compliment. At the same time, in *perfidie Albion* there is a prejudice in favour of stating the force on each side, especially where the victors were two or three to one. A naval history, however, written in this matter-of-fact manner, would not be popular in France.

Since the successes here referred to in 1706–7, up to the present day, I think I am correct in saying the French never gained a general action attested by the capture of *two* British ships, and only *one*—under very peculiar circumstances—where a *single ship* remained to verify the magniloquent bulletin. In the year 1756 Admiral Byng suffered what, if not a defeat, was equally discreditable to our arms; and respecting this affair, a very unexceptionable authority* tells us

* M. Lacretelle, “Professeur d’Histoire à l’Université Impériale.” This writer tells us, “Histoire de la France,” vol. xii. p. 249.—“La Revolution Française lui fut plus profitable que ne l’avait, etc. tant de triomphes maritimes *obtenus sur Louis XIV. et sur Louis XV. depuis le combat de la Hogue en 1689, jusqu’à la paix de 1762.*” From which we may infer that *he* at least was not aware of the superiority

it was the most glorious battle fought by France for fifty years. Agreeing with M. Lacretelle here, I can only say, the "most glorious battle" was *tres peu de chose*. There was not a single ship taken or destroyed on either side: in fact it

obtained by his own countrymen at sea during that period. As some people may be at a loss to understand how any French writer *dared* to tell the truth, under the Bonaparteian régime, it is proper to say M. Lacretelle *ends* his history *before* the "consulate."

Respecting Byng, M. L'Espinasse says, "On ne cite qu'un seul amiral Anglais, qui ait résisté de manière à être franchement battu, aussi fut-il pendu pour sa récompense." In other words, Byng was the only English admiral who did not run away, and was therefore *hanged*. As a contrast to this opinion of an officer who *never had* met the English in battle, it may be interesting to quote the somewhat different sentiments of another who *often had*. The author of a small French work entitled "Histoire des Combats d'Aboukir, de Trafalgar, de Lissa, &c. &c., par un Capitaine de Vaisseau, 1829;" and who in his preface tells us, "l'Auteur de cet ouvrage a assisté à presque tous les combats sur mer qui ont eu lieu depuis 1798," thus expresses himself (incidentally) respecting British admirals. "On observera sans doute que les amiraux Anglais restent abord de leur vaisseaux. Cela est vrai, mais ils sont *sûres* qu'en présence de l'ennemi tout motif de haine ou d'intérêt personnel, tout esprit de jalousie cèdent toujours à l'intérêt général, et à l'amour de la patrie. Toutefois dès que le signal de combattre flotte en tête du mât du vaisseau amiral, les capitaines ne voient que la gloire de leur pays TOUTS SE PRECIPITENT AU FEU ILS N'ONT PAS BESOIN D'AUTRES SIGNEAUX POUR," etc., etc. With such a testimony from the foes who *have known us*, we can afford to smile at the calumnies of those who *have not*.

may be described as a mutual cannonade. The honor of the engagement, however, certainly belonged to the French, who, though superior in weight of metal, had one ship less. M. L'Espinasse, who is pleased to sneer at the well-known cowardice of British admirals,—"qui tiennent à leur vie, et surtout, à leur vaisseaux,"—regards this as a solitary instance of one who "frankly accepted defeat."

Respecting the character of British seamen, the world has not waited till the present time to form its opinion, and for good or evil it stands on other testimony than M. L'Espinasse's. But it is curious that that gentleman should have overlooked the slur he casts upon his own countrymen in this case. Surely the French chief, whose unique good fortune it was to meet a British admiral who did not run away, should have profited by so singular a circumstance. In England, again, we do not regard poor Byng as the bravest of our admirals; but as M. L'Espinasse *does so*, why add infamy to his hard lot by asserting he was hanged? If the French writer has read history, he is aware that such is not the case,—Admiral Byng was *shot*.

From this action, which, with other disasters by land, (the natural result of our system in peace-time,) signalled the commencement of a

war which terminated so gloriously, we met with *no* naval reverses. Victory followed victory, and colony fell after colony (to be restored, according to our habit, when we dictated a peace).

The war with our revolted colonies which followed in 1775, found the united fleets of our enemies in a great numerical preponderance, but produced no corresponding result. This was the era of indecisive actions, when a practice, which had survived the causes that gave it birth, reduced naval tactics to a contest for the weather-gage.* The repeated combats between Sir Edward Hughes and Suffren were of this nature; and though the victory was constantly claimed by each, the result was—*nil*. In 1782 came the decisive victory of Rodney, (the forerunner of Nelson's victories,) when the capture of the French admiral himself put a bulletin and *Te Deum* out of the question. This, and the relief of Gibraltar after its memorable defence, terminated the disastrous war of 1775, in a manner honorable to our Navy, though leaving some stain upon our military character.

The war of 1793 opened under circumstances

* In the early days of naval warfare, when boarding usually ended the contest, and *fire-ships* formed a part of every fleet, all depended on the "weather-gage."

disadvantageous to the French navy, circumstances which (while utterly rejecting the absurd attempts of modern French writers to deny the constant defeat of their fleets) should not be lost sight of. If we wish to form a fair conjecture of the future, we must impartially study the past, and by doing so, we may yet get rid of that most dangerous enemy—*our own over-confidence*. In the breaking out of the revolutionary war, France suffered a severe loss from the surrender of Toulon by the royalists; a loss analogous to what Portsmouth would be to England. A still greater loss resulted from the emigration of the most experienced superior naval officers, who, being of the *noblesse*, were naturally royalists. The war, however, opened by a battle remarkable for the near equality of force on each side, and in which both fleets were in fair sea-order. Victory declared for the British under Lord Howe; and though a modest*

* M. Lacretelle, Professor of History, &c., gives a perfectly fair account of this battle. "Elle offrait un nombre de vaisseaux égal à ceux de la flotte Française * * * * Sept vaisseaux de l'escadre Française complètement enveloppées et ruinées dans leur greement se virent successivement obligées de se rendre * * * Cette journée fut annoncée aux Français par Barrere, au nom du comité de salut public comme la plus signalée et la plus decisive des victoires navales * * * * Quant aux sept vaisseaux qui man-

bulletin claimed it for France, yet seven captured ships left little doubt about the matter. There was here a small preponderance in weight of metal and in number of men on the side of France, but not enough to prevent its being termed an equal engagement. There is reason to think, that at an earlier period of Lord Howe's life the fruits of this victory would have been greater, as several disabled French ships were allowed to escape. It appears that the admiral was too much exhausted after the battle to make further exertion, which, considering his age, then past seventy, was only natural. From this time, up to the battle of Trafalgar, the French never sought an engagement, though accepting it gallantly when unavoidable, and for some part of the time our most important victories were gained over other powers.* Nevertheless, three general actions, all resulting in British victories, and producing two or more captures each, fill up the interval, until the decisive battle of the Nile. In some of the minor actions alluded to,

quaient à l'escadre Française, BARRERE SOUTINT IMPUDEMMENT QU'ILS ETAIENT A LA POURSUITE DES ANGLAIS." Not a bad joke certainly of M. Barrere, but "un peu trop fort" for M. Lacretelle.

* That of Earl St. Vincent with fifteen ships over twenty-seven Spanish. That of Camperdown over the Dutch, Copenhagen over the Danes, &c.

the same superiority of force which detracted from the merit of the British, lessened the material results. The engagements became running fights, which, especially in the narrow seas, can rarely be decisive. In 1798 came the decisive battle of the Nile, the most complete of Nelson's victories. Among the last inventions, by which French writers have endeavoured to reconcile the actual *fact* of French *defeat* with the *theory* of their *invincibility*, a writer in the *Siècle* has broached a new one. The *Siècle*, apropos to the vote of 93 million francs, avers, that "three-fourths of Nelson's glory" was due to his possessing three-deckers. Alas, for the ingenious supposition !

Nelson, except at Trafalgar, never had a *single* three-decker ; and *if he had had*, so far from those wretched ninety and ninety-eight-gun ships of his days giving him a superiority, they were notoriously the worst ships in the line, of smaller tonnage, and less weight of metal than a French eighty: they were, to a regular three-decker, what fifty's were to seventy-four's ; what "donkey frigates" were to the real frigate class : thank goodness, we have no more of the class now, nor even of the improved class which immediately succeeded them. To return to the battle of the Nile: Nelson's force consisted of twelve small seventy-

four's and one fifty-gun ship of half the tonnage and weight of metal of a French seventy-four. The French had one ship of 120 guns, three eighty, and nine seventy-four's; the *smallest* of *larger scantling* than the largest in Nelson's fleet. The French force was therefore indisputably superior; and though the greater skill of Nelson more than compensated for the inferiority of his fleet, it is ridiculous to allege superior tactics as negating merit. If so, where was Bonaparte's merit? The battle, as every one knows, resulted in the capture of nine French line-of-battle ships, and destruction of two, leaving of the noble fleet of thirteen sail of the line but two to escape. Passing over minor affairs, where the results, if any, were still favourable to us, we now come to the sole exception in a long line of victories, the French, or rather Franco-Spanish, victory of Algeiras; for next to the shoals, calms, and currents which baffled one of our best admirals, the Spanish batteries on shore proved most formidable. The veracious historian M. Thiers described this action as a contest between three French ships and six British, in which, without ascribing any importance to the shoals which prevented close approach, and the calms which made the British ships unmanageable, or even to the Spanish batteries, he claims unqualified victory

for his countrymen. Now the naked fact is in itself so utterly incredible, that even in France there is not a man of common judgment that would believe it. Three French ships, unassisted, defeating six British, is too monstrous an idea to combat; but there is a moral to the tale, both interesting and instructive. Admiral Linois had published to the world his defeat of a British squadron double his own force. Taking the fact as asserted, his countrymen had a right to form the highest expectations from the man who could perform a feat so unparalleled. He was, it may be said, pledged, if not to make good his boast, at least to show that an equal force stood no chance with him. Never, perhaps, in the history of the world, was a rash boast so signally punished. The subsequent history of Linois is too long to introduce here, too interesting to omit altogether: it will be found in the Appendix.* Suffice it here to say the victor of Algeziras had *six meetings* with the English after this, and was, *each of those six times, defeated*. He met them by sea, and he met them by land. He met them with double their force, and with inferior force. He was taught in his defeat, by a force only half his own, the value of such local circumstances as in the case of Sir James

* See Appendix, No. 1.

Saumarez, he had counted for nothing; and, stranger than all, it was his unenviable lot to be actually repulsed by a squadron of British merchant ships without a convoy, while his own flag was flying in a seventy-four!

The first of M. Linois' defeats, however, challenges a place in the rapid sketch of the last war here attempted. It followed after the interval of a few days, the only defeat which our squadrons sustained, and amply proved that, when not protected by rocks, shoals and batteries, M. Linois enjoyed no exemption from defeat. Indeed so fully aware was he himself of his obligations to local circumstances, that we find him urgently requesting the Spanish admiral Mazaredo to come to his relief, and protect him from the dreaded attack of the enemy he boasted of beating. The Spanish admiral accordingly proceeded to the rescue with six line-of-battle ships, making the united Franco-Spanish force amount to nine sail of the line, including two first-rates, one ninety-six, three eighty's, and three seventy-four's. It was not, however, the intention, of Sir James Saumarez to allow his foe to escape *this* time; and though he had but five ships, (one eighty; and four small seventy-four's,) he hastened to the attack of a force more than double. M. Thiers, who loses no opportunity for mean

detraction, tells us that the British admiral did so, "fearing the redoubtable judgment of the British admiralty." M. Thiers says many things he does not himself believe; but one can quite conceive that he *does* think this the most natural motive for an officer doing his duty.

A few hours brought the leading ship of the British up with the enemy, and into action with a three-decker, which soon took fire.* It was now night-time, and a panic seizing the ship first engaged, she appears to have fired indifferently on friends and foes. Seeing this, the leading British ship, leaving her first opponent, engaged a French seventy-four, and in thirty minutes had silenced her fire. In the mean time the Franco-Spanish fleet had become completely disordered, and seemed only intent on escape, regardless of the *two* three-deckers now on fire, and the seventy-four captured. The two three-deckers soon blew up, and with them two thousand men perished, which, added to the prisoners taken in the French seventy-four, and the killed and wounded in other ships, makes a total of above

* M. Thiers alleges that the two Spanish three-deckers were burned by the red-hot shot of the British. This is not true: no hot shot were used by British ships there or elsewhere during the war.

three thousand killed, wounded, and prisoners, together with three fine ships, as the enemy loss this night. M. Thiers, with his usual bad faith, represents this brilliant victory as "a night accident," and, with amusing audacity of assertion, claims the honour of the battle for the French. If he means that darkness reduces an engagement to mere chance, he might be told that one of the severest frigate actions on record was fought in the *dead of night*, which did not prevent the British frigate "Sibylle" from inflicting on her captured opponent, the "Forte," a loss of sixty-five killed, and eighty wounded, or near half her complement. But to give some little colour to the monstrous assertion, M. Thiers introduces a purely imaginary episode* of one French ship beating off four English. It is a common error with French historians, to forget

* Not only French writers, but French *painters* have their little "episodes" in naval actions, showing how one French ship put half a dozen British to flight. The most amusing of the written "episodes" is to be found in the account of Lord Howe's victory in the "Victoires et Conquêtes," a French naval and military work. In the heat of the action, when the "Montagne" 120 French flag-ship, was hard pressed by her opponent the "Queen Charlotte," a young French midshipman volunteered to "sweep the decks" of the British admiral. Consent being given, he does this by the discharge of a single carronade, and the English admiral, "*fuyant à toutes voiles*," abandons the conflict!

that the *part* is not greater than the *whole*, and to represent one French ship as doing what no four ever did. If an English historian wished to imitate M. Thiers, he might with equal truth represent this as a victory of one English ship over nine French and Spanish; but the truth is, it was a victory highly honorable to the conquerors, but in part due to the panic of the conquered. It effectually set at rest the claims of M. Linois, and wiped off the stain which the first action would have left upon our arms.

This was the last battle before the peace in 1802, and the war which succeeded the short peace of Amiens did not at first produce any general actions. The British fleet still rode triumphant on every sea, and blockaded every port, until the combinations of Bonaparte, with a view to assembling a superior fleet in the Channel, led to fresh victories. The first in point of time was Sir Robert Calder's action, with fifteen sail of the line, against Villeneuve with twenty. The result was, the capture of two enemy's ships; a result creditable to the weaker party, yet so short of what our successes under Nelson had taught us to expect, that the successful admiral was brought to trial.*

* M. Dupin, a candid French writer, observes on this: "Admiral Calder, with an inferior force, meets the Franco-

A few months later, the grand and decisive victory of Trafalgar, where twenty-seven British defeated thirty-three French and Spanish ships, may be said to have terminated the naval contest. It is the remark of a French writer, that naval victories are seldom productive: that does not, however, apply to Nelson's. The Nile and Trafalgar alone cost to our enemies thirty line-of-battle ships, and, averaging their crews at 750 each ship, *twenty-two thousand five hundred men in prisoners*. But if we take into account the subsequent captures resulting from the two engagements, (Admiral Dumanoirs' squadron was taken by Sir Richard Strachan a few days after Trafalgar,) as well as the killed and

Spanish fleet; in the *chase of it* he brings on a partial action, and takes two ships. He is tried and reprimanded, because it is thought that had he renewed the action he might have obtained a *more decisive victory*. What would have been said to Calder in England if he had commanded a superior fleet, and had lost two ships in avoiding an engagement which presented so favourable a chance to skill and valour? What would have been done with the captains?" Upon this same engagement M. Thiers observes: "But for the loss of two ships, this might be termed a victory." Indeed! He then in his usual spirit of mean detraction represents Calder "stealing away," "*se dérober*," from the fleet he had beaten.

Perhaps when M. Thiers recounts the battle of Trafalgar in his next volume, he will tell us,—“But for the nineteen ships captured, this *aurait pu passer pour une victoire*.”

wounded in ships not captured, we may set down the enemy's loss at thirty-six sail-of-the-line, and thirty thousand men, and this without the loss of a single ship to England. When it is considered that France did not possess twice this number of seamen, it is easily understood that she could never recover from such blows. Of the subsequent engagements, all of which were favourable to England, the most important was the capture and destruction of a French squadron at St. Domingo, consisting of five sail-of-the-line; by a superior British force. Other disasters signalled every year; but the superiority of our navy was now so established, that the only object of our enemies was to avoid a battle.

If we take the whole number of general actions with the French attended with any results at thirteen*, between 1793 and the peace of 1815, we shall find that one only was lost, and all the others gained. Nor can the solitary defeat be attributed to any other than local and exceptional circumstances, as was afterwards clearly shown by the very same squadron which had suffered the defeat.

* See Appendix, No. 2. By *results* I mean capture or destruction of ships. Where there has been neither, each party has claimed a *victory*, which probably belonged to none, as in the actions between Hughes and Suffren.

Passing from general actions to those single-ship engagements, which furnish an equally good test of national prowess, we shall find the result much the same. It appears, by the most accurate and industrious of our naval historians, and indeed is there established, on most indisputable authority, that of single *frigate* actions*, ending in the capture of either combatant, there were, during the war, no less than thirty-four; of these, two were French victories, the remainder were British. It is said that the exception proves the rule, and this is very forcibly shown in the case of our few defeats. While in our navy the taking of the *Ambuscade* was felt as an unprecedented disgrace, in France the capture of that British frigate, duly recorded by the painter's art, still finds a place among the principal achievements of the French arms. Where could we find room for paintings of every frigate taken in single action?

It is true that in this case the French ship was of inferior force, but not more so than the British in twenty cases where the result was different. But a still more striking proof of the value which its rareness conferred on *any* victory over a British vessel however small, may be found in the

* See Appendix, No. 3.

honours awarded to the captor of an English eighteen-gun brig,—honours which, in our navy, are reserved for the admiral who defeats a hostile fleet of equal or superior force. The present minister of marine in France, Baron de Mackau, when commanding the Abeille eighteen-gun brig, captured the British eighteen-gun brig Alacrity. The brigs were pretty well matched, but the honour, as well as the success of the day, was fairly won by the French commander, who proved himself not only a brave officer, but what was more rare with his countrymen, a skilful seaman. Without at all detracting from the merit of this exploit, however, we may safely assert that it would not have made the victor a baron, or even a K. C. B., in the British service; nor would the victory have found a place among the pictured triumph of our arms, either in our palaces or public galleries. I cannot find, that even in the sloop class, there is more than one other instance of defeat by an equal force. And *that* one involved such serious misconduct on the part of individuals, as led to their exemplary punishment. So utterly false, then, is the recent assertion of certain French newspapers respecting the triumphs of France in single actions, that the actual captures by an equal force may be summed up in four names, Ambuscade, Cleopatra

(frigates), *Carnation*, and *Alacrity* (sloops).* In making this statement I am far from wishing to indulge in useless boasting, and still further (as those will admit who read to the end) from desiring to depreciate the French navy. For that gallant service I have a sincere respect,—a respect greatly strengthened by the reflection that no disasters, however frequent, or calamitous, ever broke its spirit or shook its constancy. But in tracing the origin of that passion for naval rivalry, which now possesses France, I wish to show that it is *not* to be found in the events of last war, upon which, in 1815 and several years after, there was no illusion. Indeed, it would have been mockery to have told those who had taken part in the war, that their defeat was owing to such causes as the French press, in its ignorant envy of England, now invents. Those who fought at the Nile and Trafalgar know whether England “never dared to attack the French without one third more force;” they also know that three-deckers could

* I refer here to single actions between ships of the same class. A French paper lately asserted that Sir C. Napier admitted the superiority of France in such instances. This is incorrect: Sir C. Napier’s words are, “what followed? The French found out (towards the end of the war) that we were not invincible, and out of *nine* frigate actions, all well fought, there were four *drawn battles*.” But *not one* French victory, the five *captures* having been made by the British.

not have contributed to the former victory, inasmuch as Nelson's ships were the smallest seventy-fours, except one fifty; and they equally well know that at Trafalgar, where he *had* some three deckers, they were inferior in size and force to a French eighty. Admiral Linois could speak to this fact, having himself been captured by a ninety-eight, which was smaller by thirty-two tons than his own seventy-four, the *Marengo*.

No! whatever the writers of *La jeune France* may have discovered since 1830, nothing can be conceived more discouraging to France, or more calculated to enhance the *prestige* of the British navy, than the actual results of the war terminated in 1815. By adding together the captures of each year, respecting which there neither is nor can be any misconception, we find that from 1793 to 1815, France lost by capture no less than eighty line-of-battle ships; add to these twenty ships destroyed in action, or consequent to it,—and we have a total loss through the enemy (England) of one hundred sail of the line. Of French frigates there were captured one hundred and thirty-seven; burnt or otherwise destroyed by the enemy twenty-nine,—total one hundred and sixty-six.* Of corvettes, brigs, and smaller

* As a French reader, should I have one, might wish to know from what sources these statements are obtained, I

vessels, captured or destroyed, it is less easy to ascertain the number ; but it must have been very great. Yet these sacrifices in *materiel*, with the corresponding losses in *personnel*, are far from giving the full extent of the disasters which came to dispel the Bonapartean dream of "ships, colonies, and commerce." Of this triad the ships were either under the British flag or closely blockaded in their own ports. The colonies, one and all, owned the sway of a British sovereign, and commerce was annihilated. The very elements of naval power had passed away from France, and it was to the generosity of England alone that she could look for the means of laying anew the foundations of a powerful marine. The other European powers, whom the tyranny of Bonaparte had forced into war with England, shared in the defeats and losses of France ; and the peace of 1815 found but one flag on the wide ocean. It is not wonderful, then, that a French minister* should hesitate about restoring

beg to refer him to the naval history of Mr. James, in six volumes 8vo.,—a work which, for industry, accuracy, and impartiality, can hardly be too much praised. There is in the appendix of each volume a list of captures made and losses incurred in each year, from whence I have taken the numbers given above. As every ship's name is given, there can be no mistake as to what were captured.

* M. de Portalis.

a navy, whose existence had proved so precarious, or that a more patriotic Frenchman* (whose patriotism, however, did not consist in slandering a successful rival) should visit England to study the organisation of her navy, and hold up that service as an example to his countrymen.

* M. C. Dupin.

CHAP. VI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SUCH was the *prestige* of our navy, and such its supremacy, undeniable as the noon-day sun, in 1815. Does that *prestige* exist now, and where shall we find any traces of it? Is it in the French navy, burning to try its fortune again in war? Is it in that impulse, which has made all France turn with the eyes of hope, not to her army, her natural strength, but to her navy? Is it in the enormous sacrifices demanded of France by the minister of marine, to place her navy on a war footing in peace time, or in the zeal of the French chambers to give, outrunning the readiness of the minister to ask? Is it in the anxiety shown by the whole French press, to turn any imaginary grievance into a cause of war with England, or in the mania, which M. Arago assures, us seized the very French guns in 1840? Is it in the language of a royal admiral, whose pamphlet excited some interest at the time, and whose anti-English suggestions have all been adopted in the French naval estimates

for 1846 ? Or, finally, is it in such language as the following, which there is reason to believe expresses the feeling of the French navy in the present day ? “ People granted, with reference to the events of 1840, that we had the chances of a first success in our favour. We should ask no more ! twenty-four hours well employed would suffice to transport, in three or four voyages, 60 or 80,000 men to that country which, by a just revolution in sublunary affairs, would learn at last that war is a dreadful scourge to her as well as to other nations. France, who in continental wars, ever without result, sacrifices two millions of men, would not hesitate (we must believe) at the dangers to which she must expose 60,000 of her soldiers in the most *national*, and let us haste to declare it, the most useful, of expeditions. For *it is in England* are to be found those fair colonies of which war has deprived us. In England too, we must seek that frontier of the Rhine, which we madly went to Moscow to demand, from those who would never have refused us, had we not gone to seek a dispute with them.” (Pamphlet of M. de Lespinasse.) It would be easy to quote not words alone, but *acts*, to show how generally the feeling here expressed actuates the French navy ; but is there any one who really doubts it ?

No; we cannot shut our eyes to the fact, that the *prestige*, which a hundred victories and a long career of success had conferred upon our navy in the eyes of rivals exists no longer. Our confidence may be unabated, but the respectful awe with which foreign countries regarded our navy, and which more surely than any *entente cordiale*, more cheaply than fleets and armies, guarded our shores, is gone.

It was not the hand of time alone, which robbed us of this honourable shield, nor have any reverses tarnished the imperishable laurels of last war. But I think it may be shown that it was partly our own measures that raised up the French navy from the despondency of 1815 to the boastful confidence of 1846; that it was our own most "wasteful and extravagant economy" which first suggested the idea of seizing the trident, apparently grown too heavy for our hands, and which originated a naval rivalry as yet only expensive to the treasury, hereafter, perhaps, to be wasteful of blood.

I have remarked that 1815 was the period of extreme depression of the French navy; but in that year, as if to confirm the remark of Froissart, that though England is usually successful in war, she is always outwitted by France in treaties of peace, we began by the gratuitous

restoration of the French colonies. This was the first step towards the restoration of the French navy,—an object which our negotiators certainly had not in view, but which, as a naval man, I am far from regretting. The extinction of the French navy would be as fatal to England as was the destruction of Carthage to Rome; for no nation in Europe is so unwilling to believe in the possibility of war as ourselves, or so prone to neglect its defences in peace time. Had not the noisy bluster of M. Thiers forced us to notice the march which his more statesmanlike predecessor had stolen upon us in naval preparations, it is hard to say how long we might have deferred any defensive measures. As it was, while France was arming not her coast alone, but her metropolis against us; raising her army to a million of men, and embarking every available sailor; singing “Marseillaise,” and bawling “*Mort aux anglais!*” England neither added a recruit to her army, a gun to her defenceless coasts, nor a ship to any but her Mediterranean squadron. Nay, it required eighteen months of persevering hostility (in words) to make us place our ships on a proper establishment, as to complement of seamen.

Returning, however, to history; let us come to 1830, an important epoch in the career of the

French navy. The capture of Algiers in that year, though effected by the army chiefly, gave to the French navy an opportunity of showing the zeal and gallantry in which it never has been deficient. Such operations never fail to stimulate the courage and improve the *morale* of the forces engaged, and to the successes which have marked the reign of L. Philippe, much of the actual improvement as well as the confidence of the French navy, may be attributed.* The revolution of July, which aroused the military spirit of all Frenchmen, was not without its effect upon the navy, and the wise monarch gave a farther encouragement to that profession, by devoting one of his sons to it. In doing so, he perhaps remembered the patriotic example of George III.; and it is somewhat significant of altered circumstances, that a French prince of the blood, has, *for the first time*, made the navy his profession. It is related, if I remember rightly, of the Spanish admiral Langara, that, when made prisoner by Rodney in 1780, he said, alluding to the Duke of Clarence, then serving

* Whatever the *arena* (it were absurd to call it *colony*) of Algiers be worth to France, in other respects, it gives her a veteran army, and affords much valuable practice to her navy.

as a midshipman in Rodney's flag-ship, "that country deserves to rule the ocean which sends its princes of the Blood to serve in the navy."

Absit omen !

The next success of the French navy under the "Napoleon de la paix," was in the Tagus in 1832; where the passage was forced in very good style, and the Portuguese squadron captured at their anchors. I have been told by English officers present, that the affair was creditably executed, though the resistance was not of a nature to call forth any high degree of skill or conduct. It was, however, a *success*, and, as such, told favourably on the French navy at large.

Before coming to the next achievement of the French arms — an achievement accompanied by the most humiliating insult to which our flag has ever been subjected*, — it is proper to advert

* The affair of her Majesty's brig *Express*, now forgotten in England, so little sensitive are we on the national point of honour. The French squadron, then blockading Vera Cruz under Admiral Baudin, was in want of a pilot to take it in to the attack; seeing the *Express* coming out of the harbour, and knowing she had a pilot on board, the Prince de Joinville, by order of his admiral, sent an armed boat's crew to take him out by force. The lieutenant commanding the brig, who at Trafalgar had seen more than one ship and more than one admiral taught to respect the British flag,

to a change, which took place in our own navy ; a change which, more than any improvement of our rivals, gave them a relative superiority, and perhaps led to the outrage alluded to. Since the peace, our ships have always had a reduced number of men, under the name of a peace-establishment. In 1834-35, however, the unfortunate idea occurred, of *still further reducing the reduced complement*, as a measure of economy. A more unhappy experiment could not have been made. It disgusted our seamen, discouraged our officers, crippled our ships, and by exhibiting them in a state of efficiency below

unfortunately, instead of sending the French boat about its business, and forcing Admiral Baudin either to respect the flag or to capture the Express, allowed the unhappy pilot to be dragged away. To unprofessional persons it may be necessary to explain, that by the law of nations, the vessels of any state are a portion of its territory, and nothing is more jealously maintained than the inviolability of our flag as a sanctuary to those who seek it. Of course an apology was made after the object had been attained. It was pretended that the Express was "not known to be a vessel of war." Though employed as a packet at the time, no such mistake could have occurred ; and did we not confound branches of the service totally different, Her Majesty's pendant, the proud emblem of glorious Queen Bess, would never have been disgraced in a vessel without the proper attributes of a man-of-war. The English officer, though old, was not deficient in gallantry, but a vessel without the means of making our flag *respected* should not be allowed to wear the "pendant."

that of foreign ships, very naturally suggested the idea that our navy was declining. Unhappily this was made a party question, though it so happened that *both* parties in the state, had an equal share in the measure. The reduction was devised by a Tory government, and carried into effect by a Whig. Both, no doubt, desired the public good, and some distinguished naval officers approved of the measure. But experience, our best guide, has now decided the question; and it is to be hoped that when the next cold fit of economy seizes us, we may rather recal our ships, and pay them off altogether, than make an exhibition of them abroad.

To landsmen it may be well to explain, that the efficiency of a ship is not like that of a regiment, which is independent of numbers. A regiment of 500 strong may be as efficient as a regiment of 1000 (in peace time), but reduce a ship's company from 800 to 400, and the ship loses every characteristic of a man-of-war.* In

* A person must have *seen* in order to appreciate the dispiriting effect upon a ship's company produced by reducing their numbers. A sailor's expression for a fine crew is, "they tear the ship to pieces," or "they make everything *fly*," but a "short complement" is his horror; and not without reason; it entails *double work*. Much ingenious argument has been expended in proving the *advantage* of undermanning ships, even in war. Trafalgar has been quoted as

manœuvring (unlike the supposed regiment) all would go slowly and ill. It is the rapidity of simultaneous movements, resulting from strength and numbers, which marks the difference between a man-of-war and a merchant-ship in manœuvring. Up to the year 1835, no foreign ship could compete with a British man-of-war in the different evolutions of seamanship. Indeed, they studiously avoided all competition in this respect. After the reduction of complements, however, the case was reversed, and it was our ships which avoided such rivalry. The effect on the *morale* of our seamen was deplorable, and this, concurrently with other causes, unnecessary to detail, reduced our "glorious Navy" for some years to a very inglorious state. It is impossible that foreigners *should* have overlooked this change, and it is certain they *did* not. The

an instance, our ships having had very short crews there. The opposite inference might be more fairly drawn even from *that* case. True, we captured nineteen ships, and equally true is it that we *lost* them again in the gale that followed; the miserably insufficient prize crews being unable even to guard the prisoners! Had we been able to send one hundred and fifty men instead of fifty to refit a line-of-battle ship, work her off a lee shore, and at the same time control six hundred French prisoners, we might, even now, have some of the Trafalgar prizes on our navy list, as we have ships taken in earlier actions.

published letters of French officers show how much they both observed and exulted in the supposed decline of our navy ; and if this view, superadded to the proneness of French officers* to take offence where none is intended, did not lead to actual collisions, the merit is due to our own officers.

During this period of decrepitude in our own navy, the French, who were carrying on three wars in different parts of the globe, achieved a new victory at San Juan de Ulua,—certainly the master achievement of their arms. Of this feat, though the highest military authority in England, and of his day, declared it to be “a very pretty affair,” Englishmen in general seem to have formed too low an estimate. It was an attack upon a regular fortress, not built by bar-

* As the *last* instance of this proneness I may quote from the French *National* a few days ago :—“About the middle of November the line-of-battle ship *Collingwood*, which some months previously had saluted by order the flag of the Protectorate, had re-appeared at Papeiti. This time they pretended to dispense with the salute, and it required a formal and *threatening* (!) injunction from the French authorities to *force* them to render the honours due to a friendly nation.”

We have had to stomach much at Tahiti, but it is not credible that *this* happened ; still the very *report* shows the view taken of such matters. It is not *customary* to salute *every* time of entering a friendly port.

barians, but by Spaniards in their best days, with a force of only three frigates, two bombs, and two war steamers. The remainder of the squadron, excepting the Prince de Joinville's Corvette, took no part. The fire of the French ships reduced the fortress to a ruinous state, and after inflicting a loss of about 400 men on its garrison, compelled it to surrender. It is true the French ships occupied a point of comparative impunity, but this does not deprive them of the merit of good gunnery or skill. The reduction of the castle was followed by a very dashing attack on the town of Vera Cruz by land, and the French sailors showed themselves not less efficient on shore than they had been just proved at sea.

While an exploit so creditable was calculated to raise the French still higher in their own opinion, many circumstances must have tended to depreciate our navy in their eyes. On this very occasion, as above related, a French boat's crew had dragged a helpless foreigner, who vainly clung to the English ensign for protection, from the very quarter-deck (O humiliation!) of a British brig of war. As we must believe that the French admiral expected every resistance to such an unprecedented outrage, how cheaply must they have held our navy at

the time! What oceans of blood would have atoned for such an insult to the French flag? Those who condemn Lord Palmerston for having at last been aroused by the overbearing pretensions of France to dictate to all Europe, should bear in mind that no English minister ever yet showed such forbearance as he had previously done. Perhaps, indeed, this proves that a jealousy of the national honour is the best preserver of peace. Had we demanded the immediate punishment of the officer who had perpetrated this insult, and enforced the demand; had we maintained in peace the position which we *must* maintain in war, or *perish*,—it is probable we should not have had to stomach further indignities. Our policy, however, was different; it was not until the affair of the *Express* was brought forward in Parliament that any satisfaction was obtained. Some further affairs of a similar nature, though less outrageous character, which need not be detailed here, followed this sad business.

It was in the Mediterranean, however, that the new-born confidence of France began about this time (1839—1840) to show itself most unequivocally. We have already observed, that when the French minister decided upon a policy repugnant to the views of all Europe, and in

violation of the understanding he had himself concurred in, he must have informed himself of the means at his disposal to give effect to his diplomacy. In 1839, and early in 1840, our ships in the Mediterranean were, generally speaking, small, under-manned, and with very indifferent crews: our flag-ship, although a three-decker, was smaller, and of less force in men and guns than the French two-decked ships. Our squadron was also numerically weaker; and though a subsequent increase of complement, by means of drafts from England, inspired confidence and improved the *morale* of our fleet, there certainly was a time when its situation was very precarious. The Prince de Joinville's opinion about this critical period, backed by that of one of the "most skilful officers of the British navy," has been already given (p. 54.). It is not clear what British officer was meant (probably Sir Charles Napier); but there are many who think that, both then and since, our inability to raise any considerable number of seamen in cases of emergency, and our scanty force in commission, have exposed us to danger. Some even go farther, and assert, that the defeat of our Mediterranean squadron at that time would have been a national benefit, had it taught us not to postpone the question of manning the

fleet until war breaks out. Let our own views of the crisis of 1840 be what they may, there is no doubt that the French consider themselves robbed of a certain victory by the prudence of their government, or rather sovereign.

Though not productive of victory, the year 1840 and the three subsequent ones were profitable to the French navy. Their Mediterranean squadron had been raised to above twenty sail of the line, and the majority of them, formed into a "squadron of evolution," were exercised for months in those essential fleet manœuvres, which can only be acquired by practice. Judging from a letter, signed by one of the captains of that squadron, which appeared in the *Journal des Débats* in autumn of 1841, it would seem that they attained to a high degree of efficiency. Indeed, if the time occupied in the different manœuvres was correctly noted I can only say it has never been my good fortune to witness such promptitude in our own navy. I greatly regret the loss of the copy I took at the time, and cannot be positive as to its details. One piece of practice, in forming the line of battle in close order, struck me as both novel and excellent. To ascertain that no undue interval was left between any two ships, a verbal message was passed from the leading ship (supposed flag-ship) to her next

astern, and so on through the whole line to the rear ship. That ship, to show that the message had been transmitted without error, then repeated its purport by telegraph, and thus the compactness of the line was proved, and valuable practice obtained.

The time occupied by the French fleet in weighing from single anchor with forty fathoms of cable out, was stated to be from twelve to fifteen minutes, and, if I mistake not, when moored, from twenty to thirty. The different tactical manœuvres under sail were reported to be performed with certainty and precision; and in this respect it is doing no injustice to our own navy, considering that it is seventeen years, at least, since they have had any such practice, to admit our inferiority.* The French government have now a squadron of evolutions every year, and of course the number of officers, who are thus instructed, is always increasing.

The year of 1844 was signalised by the affair or affairs of Tahiti, and the bombardment of

* As far as I have ever heard, Sir Pulteney Malcolm was the last admiral who exercised a squadron (1829) in tactics properly so called. Our naval officers generally have an aversion if not contempt for this branch of their duty. How far this is wise I cannot pretend to judge, but as the art of manœuvring in concert can only be acquired by practice, our deficiency *may possibly* prove a serious evil.

Tangiers and Mogador. The first event might convince us, were not the experience of 1840 conclusive on the point, that an understanding, however "cordial," with the government of a country whose people are hostile is necessarily precarious. The Tahiti affair may also illustrate the disadvantage under which a country must negotiate, which cannot in peace time support its diplomacy by any efficient demonstration.

Having been at Plymouth when this affair looked most menacing, I was forcibly struck with the disproportion between our resources in *material*, and our available means in *personnel*. By exhausting all our reserve of seamen, if the word will apply to a mere handful, we had full manned two out of three flag-ships in England. One of these two had been despatched to Gibraltar to join the Mediterranean flag-ship and the Albion, then observing the Prince de Joinville, while the other flag-ship constituted the reserve force in England, making a total in Europe of five sail of the line.* As some preparations were thought necessary, in case of an unfavourable issue to pending negotiations, several ships were brought down the harbour and "masted."

* The Collingwood, 80, under orders for the Pacific Station, not having sailed, made a second line-of-battle ship in England full manned.

As the huge "leviathans," with their double and triple tiers, crowded together and successively received their masts, an uninformed observer might have been impressed with the vast, though dormant, power of Great Britain. But when an attempt was made to procure the "thews and sinews," which alone could give power and significance to these giant fabrics,—when orders were sent to every port to enter all the seamen procurable*,—the result was *utter failure*. Some dozen, indeed, of the worst description of seamen, who would have been rejected under ordinary circumstances, took this opportunity of tendering their worthless services. But I assert confidently, that a sufficient supply of seamen for *one* line-of-battle ship could not be procured in this way. Not that any efforts were wanting on the part of the Admiralty; but such has always been the result of our system hitherto, and such would be the result if we wanted seamen for any emergency tomorrow. Had we commissioned several sail of

* Orders were given to receive all volunteers at the different dockyards as disposable seamen, and bills were posted inviting them to enter. I speak from personal observation when I say, that the result must have satisfied any French agent that there was nothing to apprehend from our *demonstration*.

the line, they would have got seamen in the course of *some months*, but not in time to have any effect on the negotiations in progress. Had we indeed resorted to impressment, we might have manned some ships more speedily, but a measure so strong and unusual might also have precipitated events, and under a minister less pacific than M. Guizot, might have provoked some *coup de main*, for which we were totally unprepared.* Under the circumstances we were fortunate in obtaining terms, which, if not quite satisfactory on the point of honour, nor likely to deter other foreign officers from imprisoning our consuls, and threatening their lives†, were all we could expect and more than we were prepared to enforce.

The experience of this affair was not lost on government, and at the next meeting of parliament (to the delight of the whole navy) the esti-

* M. Guizot's letter purporting to be a reprimand to the lieutenant who arrested Mr. Pritchard and threatened his life, for the "informality" (!) of his proceedings, was in fact a letter of praise slightly qualified with blame. Such a letter as an English officer would consider the forerunner of promotion, which indeed, I believe, it proved in M. D'Aubigné's case.

† Since writing the above, I have heard it asserted that a considerable military force *was* collected at Cherbourg during the time referred to.

mates provided for the maintenance of four additional sea-going line-of-battle ships. The pleasure, indeed, of hearing that we were again to see an efficient force upon our shores, was modified by the apologies with which the prime minister made the announcement. In a speech evidently addressed across the Channel, the expressions used would seem to imply that, unless as an *experimental* squadron, England had no business with ships in time of peace; that she required the permission of foreign powers before she raised her force in Europe to an equality with theirs; and that, in fact, a British squadron was something so exceptionable and unusual as to need excuses. I have not read that the French minister makes any apology for maintaining a much larger force, or assigns any better reason for doing so, than the true one: that he thinks it expedient. It is to be hoped that the time will come, or rather return, when the British minister of the day will only think it necessary to excuse the *diminution* of our fleet in commission below its natural level, that of *preponderant force*.

The French victories of Tangier and Mogador, in the same year, bring the peace-time successes of their navy to a close. From personal communications with English officers present on

those occasions, it would appear that our countrymen did not think very highly of the French gunnery, or the manner in which some of their ships were brought into action. A third party, who can unconcernedly view the strife of battle, will naturally form such a judgment. The firing of the very best gunners in action will fall far short of target practice—if from no other cause, from the smoke inseparable from quick firing, and a few very “wide balls” would produce the impression of bad gunnery.

But it is not denied that the French destroyed the batteries—no great things, it is true,—opposed to them, and where the object is effected, it is not fair to be hypercritical. Some of our own most brilliant victories were not unattended with mismanagement, not to say misconduct, and the latter is not here chargeable to the French.

Having thus briefly sketched what may be called the revival and progress of the French navy from 1815 to 1846, and taken some notice of such contemporary events in our own, as would give confidence to our rivals, I would ask, Is such confidence unaccountable? When we remember the effect produced at home by the success of Acre, and the very absurd conclusions

drawn from it, can we wonder that the French should be a little *tête montée* after four similar successes? But a Frenchman would assign further reasons for his belief and hopes. We may suppose a French naval officer, not a disciple of the *Siècle*, or a foolish brawler against England, but a candid liberal-minded man, to express himself thus:—

“ You beat us last war very decidedly ; but while we do not deny our past defeats, neither are we discouraged by them ; on the contrary, in the midst of our most fatal reverses, we recognise traits of heroism and fortitude, which console us for the past, and give us hopes for the future. Englishmen have never doubted our courage, but with the blindness with which national character is often estimated, they have supposed French courage, though fiery and impetuous, to be wanting in endurance. Yet there is no fact more incontestably established, than the fortitude shown by French officers and seamen when over-matched in skill or numbers. Your own official returns, and the dispatches of your commanders when victorious, will show that the resistance of French ships was often prolonged beyond the bounds of duty, and to the verge of desperation. The captors often

took possession of a slaughter-house rather than a ship of war.*

“ On the other hand, the causes of our defeat, which are palpable and not to be mistaken, are not of a permanent nature, nor innate in Frenchmen, as we flatter ourselves are our courage and endurance. The most cursory glance of an impartial naval history, and perhaps your countrymen have been the fairest, (it is easier for the successful party to be so) will show that it was the superior efficiency of your fire which subdued our ships.† While your gunners were

* The desperate though at the same time unskilful defence of French ships, especially in the earlier part of the war, is proved by all the best English authorities.

† To show the truth of this view we may compare the loss in *personnel* of the five first decisive frigate actions in the war, where the combatants were well matched : —

1. Crescent and Réunion. British loss, 0 killed, 0 wounded. French loss, 33 killed, 48 wounded. French ship captured.

2. Blanche and Pique : very equal force. British loss, 8 killed, 21 wounded. French loss, 76 killed, 110 wounded. French ship captured.

3. Dryad and Proserpine. British, 2 killed, 7 wounded. French, 30 killed, 45 wounded. French ship captured.

4. Sybille and Forte (French force very superior.) British loss, 5 killed, 17 wounded. French, 65 killed, 80 wounded. French ship captured.

I have omitted here the first action, where the loss is more nearly equal, the *Nymphe* and *Cleopâtre*. British loss,

clearing our quarters, we were shooting away your 'royal yards,' or wasting our fire on the clouds. Not that your gunnery was good, the art was then unknown at sea, but that ours was detestable. Yet, as men are not born gunners, we do not despair of training our seamen to a high degree of perfection before the next war, and, depend upon it, we shall spare neither expense nor pains in doing so. Some French officers will tell you, that we already surpass you in rapidity of fire, and it seems, that what Lord Collingwood considered irresistibly rapid fire in his day, is far surpassed by our gunners in the present. Lord Collingwood used to tell his sea-

23 killed, 27 wounded. French, 63 killed and wounded. But those given show the *general* result.

If we take general actions, I apprehend the same superiority in the effects of our fire will be evident; as Lord Howe's victory, where the force on each side is here given, will show :—

Number of Ships.	Number of Guns in Broadside.	Men.	Tons.
British - - 26	1087	17,241	22,976
French - - 26	1107	19,987	28,126

British loss, 290 killed, 858 wounded. French loss (*in the six captured ships only*), 690 killed, 580 wounded. The loss in the rest of the French fleet is not accurately known, as it may well be supposed M. Barrere did not particularise it.

men, that no enemy could resist them if they were able to fire three broadsides in *five* minutes. We fire *six* in little more than *half that time*. At all events, you will not deny that, with such seamen as you will get by impressment raw merchant sailors; the superiority will *at first* be with us. In seamanship, also, you had a great advantage over us, and here, again, we console ourselves by thinking, that seamanship is not *innate*, but *acquired*. We now maintain as many seamen in peace as you do, and of late years they have had more practice against an enemy. Our commercial marine is greatly increased, and is still increasing; it is with us, as you are aware, not a nursery merely, but a school, or rather an auxiliary branch of our royal navy; for in France, commerce, foreign policy, and colonies, are all made subservient to our primary object—a powerful navy. In *materiel* your superiority is incontestible; yet that by no means precludes the weaker party from achieving victories, as your last war with America sufficiently proved. The Americans had not a twentieth of your force, but by opposing heavier and better manned ships to you, they tore many laurels from your brow. Nor is the French navy in reality as weak as you may suppose; it is true, we have but forty line-of-battle ships, built or

building, but you will perhaps be surprised to see our first class frigates take their place in the line-of-battle. They are far better able to do so than many of your small class two-decked ships in the last war. A French sixty-gun frigate of the present day is double the tonnage and force of your old fiftys on two decks. Yet the *Leander*, fifty, fought at the Nile, and subsequently engaged the French seventy-four, *Gene-reux*, for four hours. Even the sixty-fours, such as Nelson's favourite ship, the *Agamemnon*, in which he won his earlier laurels, and which class formed a great part of your line-of-battle force last war, would be no match in size, metal, or crew, for our large frigates. Against this class, unless you oppose line-of-battle ships to them, you have very few frigates able to contend. Your *razées* of fifty guns may be opposed to our sixty's, but of those you have not more than ten. We hope, when our frigate class is raised to the number (sixty-six) suggested by the *Prince de Joinville*, and provided for in our last estimates, to have a force on every point of the globe in peace-time, which, without exciting the attention which an equal number of line-of-battle ships would do, will be scarcely less formidable. We have also, as you are aware, seized upon military positions in the principal tracks of your

trade, to serve as *points d'appui* for those frigate squadrons*; so that, as suggested by the Prince de Joinville, they would be ready, at the breaking out of a war, to inflict incalculable injury on your commerce, and perhaps, by uniting, to capture some of your line-of-battle ships. Of our steam force I say nothing; for though our present estimates provide for a larger number of steam frigates than you have, either built or building, yet it is possible you may decide upon keeping pace with us. But though we should not outbuild, or even equal you here, you must allow there are many chances for the weaker party, which, secure from invasion, as France is, and with few colonies to defend, can choose her time and point of attack.

“In the important point of *morale*, we think, perhaps erroneously, that our seamen have an advantage over yours. It seems to us impossible, that the very foundation of military *morale*, that is, *esprit de corps*, can exist among seamen raised as yours are. A seaman in the British navy is engaged, as in the merchant service, for a particular ship; and to that ship alone, not to his sovereign or his country, is his service due.

* Since this was written, the French, besides Nossi Be, have occupied two other little noresses—I forget their names—on the coast of Madagascar.

He cannot be transferred to another ship; nay, when his own is lost*, his connection with the public service ceases. He is taken up by the job, hired for a term, and owns no other obligation to his sovereign than to the individual merchant who might bargain for his services. He belongs to no corps, like your soldier or our seamen. It is no wonder, under these circumstances, that desertion is so common with you; and is not the greater prevalence of that crime in your navy some proof of a lower *morale* than that of ours? But though it were invidious to urge this point, you must admit that your first step in war (I mean impressment) would be a blow at the loyalty, a stab at the *morale*, of your own navy. Your best authorities allow as much, and it were equally indubitable if they denied it; for reason and the principles of human nature alike tell us that such a method must be odious, even if necessary.

“Our superior officers are still in the prime of life; and, unlike yours, are in pretty constant employment. It is a necessary consequence of your large list, that officers must be a long time unemployed, and that, when qualified for com-

* That is, after a court-martial has been held on the officers and crew who may survive.

mand by seniority, they become disqualified by long retirement from active service.

“ *Au reste*, to you belongs the *prestige* of past success, to us the teaching of adversity. We have learned in the least pleasing, but we trust the most instructive, school. You may smile at our confidence, because it is new-born : yet it is for that reason less likely to deceive us.

“ We build upon what *is*, not on what *was*, and we are safe from the danger, which has proved fatal to many nations—a reliance upon successes achieved in a state of things which has passed away. Spain still retains the pillars of Hercules on her coin, but upon Gibraltar your flag has long been waving.”

Such we might suppose to be the speculations of a French naval officer, on the future of his own profession ; and without subscribing to their truth, we must allow they have some foundation in facts. Let it be remembered that defeats (and of a very mortifying and discreditable character) may be, and *have been*, inflicted by the weaker party. Had any one, previous to the last American war, told us that an upstart power possessed of half-a-dozen frigates and twice as many sloops, should have turned the balance of success against us, we should have laughed them to scorn. Yet the three years of

American war cost us not comparatively only, but absolutely, more defeats in single actions than twenty years of war with France. All the frigates of France, and the number captured alone was 137, did not take from us more prizes of the same class in single actions, than the one American frigate "Constitution."*

Such recollections should make us cautious of holding our adversaries in contempt, and few nations are more prone to do so than ourselves. I shall not stop here to express any opinion upon this last of the three grounds which, as before said, Frenchmen rely on.

* In accounting for the defeats of the American war Englishmen are accustomed to attribute them *wholly* to the superior size and force of the enemy's ships. It is perfectly true that this superiority was sufficient to account for the unfavourable result, nay, to make such result inevitable; yet candour compels us to admit that the immediate and actual cause of our defeat, in several instances, was the *superior gunnery of the Americans*. That our ships should have been captured by opponents half as large again, is no proof of extraordinary prowess in the victors, but that half the ships taken should be reduced to a sinking state, and actually founder, is irresistible evidence of good gunnery.

CHAP. VII.

THE NATURE OF OUR OWN CONFIDENCE IN THE NAVY
EXAMINED.

HAVING said so much on the nature of that confidence in their navy, which indisputably possesses our neighbours, it is time to consider the equally strong but opposite reliance, that Englishmen repose in the invincibility of their "wooden walls." That our confidence is implicit and unlimited, is sufficiently proved by the important, or rather vital, interests which we stake upon it. Is our reliance as well founded as it is sincere?

The belief of Englishmen in this superiority of their own navy and seamen, is not only the natural but the unavoidable result of past experience, and though the courage of our seamen should ever decline, or the skill of our officers depart, we should still retain our traditional faith, until compelled by adversity to abandon it. But in the minds of landmen, at least, there must be often very indistinct ideas as to what this superiority consists in, and indeed as to the sense in which they use the word "NAVY." If by our

navy they mean the aggregate of those formidable structures which, for the most part, "slumber in their shadows" on the Medway, the Tamar or Porchester and Fareham lakes, the superiority of that navy is undeniable. If, again, they use the word in a larger sense, and mean not only the ships and men of the royal navy, but those vast unorganised resources, those thousands of merchant seamen, who might *in time* be made available, equally undeniable is our *potential* superiority.

But it cannot be in either sense that the word "navy" can be understood, whether by gentlemen in after-dinner speeches, when they respond to the toast, "our glorious navy;" by old ladies, when they retire to bed, thankful for "the navy," which saves them from the danger of a *razzia*; by blockheads, when they petition against the enrolment of the militia; or wise statesmen, when they defer commencing harbours of refuge until war breaks out. It is clear that all these classes imagine the "navy" to be a present and available force, a ready shield of defence, or, if need be, a sword prompt to avenge.

Now the portion of our navy answering this description is the force "in commission," and this varies, as is said, with the exigency of foreign policy, and perhaps of economy. Some-

times we have no available force at all, either at home or in Europe, and should an exigency arise, we should have to commission ships and wait for months before they were manned. When they *were* manned, those newly-commissioned ships would be very indifferent representatives of our "glorious navy," and for some time, whether superior to foreigners or not, would be immeasurably inferior to English ships longer in commission. An old "Queen's pilot," whose experience and opportunities of judging must have been very great, remarked to the writer once the vast difference in the efficiency of ships going out of port the first time, and the same ships returning from foreign service, adding that the former were at times "*as helpless as young soldiers*:" the efficiency here meant was in the discharge of those nautical duties which *might* be expected from merchant sailors. Of course in respect of military duties the difference would be far greater; a newly-commissioned ship, if manned by merchant sailors, would not be a "man-of-war" for *some months* at least.

Now when we consider that our force in commission forms but a small fraction of that which we should require in war, and that of the remainder we know no more than of the qualifications of the 101st regiment, whenever it shall be

raised, how can we draw comparisons between our own and the French fleet? May not success, at least the earlier successes, of the war depend on the best organisation of resources in peace-time? *

The confidence which our naval men feel in the superiority of a British fleet, is, perhaps, a *feeling* rather than an inference from any reasoning, and it is to be hoped we shall never loose or repent of it. In so far as such feeling rests upon any particular grounds, it is founded upon our acknowledged superiority in seamanship and presumed advantage in coolness or *sang froid*. Our advantage in seamanship, however, is likely to be in some degree lost to us, from our want of any practice in fleet manœuvres, which would preclude us from any thing so hazardous as manœuvring in action.

But there is another species of confidence, founded upon an illiberal contempt for foreigners, and a belief in the perfection of our own navy, which is neither conducive to, nor in any way connected with, success. It should lower the value of this kind of national vanity, when we find French officers just as confidently asserting the pre-eminence of their own seamen, nay,

* It is not of course meant to assert that we should maintain as many seamen in peace as in war, but that we should keep pace with our neighbours in respect of disposable force.

their exclusive fitness for naval war (see p. 56.). Our superior seamanship, one would be very sorry to doubt or undervalue, but other elements of success will claim a large share in future victories.

It was the blind confidence above noticed which at one time opposed all improvement in our navy, and which, had it been shared by the higher authorities, would have left us in the rear, instead of the van, of naval powers. There used to be a foolish practice of condemning the introduction of any thing new, on the ground that "we did very well without it last war;" and I have even known officers opposed to ever exercising the men at quarters on such a plea.

Yet the most valuable improvements in all departments of the navy have been made since the peace, and many of them very recently. Even the all-important art of gunnery, or of working and aiming cannon properly, may be said to have originated since the war; for there is ample proof that, though we surpassed our adversaries in efficiency of fire, the execution done bore no proportion to the ammunition expended.* Indeed, we neither understood the

* An examination of the accounts, whether private or official, English or Foreign, of the last war, will leave us utterly at a loss to account for ships cannonading each other

principles of the science, nor did the mistaken economy (?) of government allow us to supply the deficiency by practice. The credit of introducing the study and practice of gunnery into the British navy, or, at least, of making it general, belongs in a great degree to a distinguished officer* under whom the writer had the good fortune to serve. To him, also, belonged the credit of establishing a proper allowance of ammunition for exercise, an outlay which will be repaid to the nation ten times over, should we have another war.

So far, then, from our having reached perfection in the days of Nelson (glorious as they certainly were to our navy), we have made great

at "pistol shot" (though we should suppose that to be one or two hundred yards), for hours without result. What became of the shot? I think the clue is furnished by the letters of officers themselves, in some cases, who, with evident complacency, detail the manner of loading the guns with "three and four shot each!" They might as well have loaded with boiled peas. Those who cannot conceive that cannon should have been used for centuries, before gunnery was known, may consider the instance of the oldest art and the oldest instrument in use, *agriculture* and the *plough*. Both have been in use near 6000 years: yet even to-day, over nine-tenths of the world, the plough is a crooked tree with a spike to scratch rather than to penetrate the earth, and agriculture is as much advanced as it was in the days of Abraham.

* Sir John Brooke Pechell, C.B.

progress of late years, and have very recently corrected some anomalies of the olden time which it appears wonderful should have so long survived. It seems almost incredible, for instance, that long after the peace we should have had two *fast days* a week for our seamen, “ban-yan days,” not “for the good of their souls,” but for the benefit of the treasury :

That we should have been so sparing of the stores required for necessary repairs, and of ammunition for exercise, as to make it a matter of necessity for officers to resort to a system of false expenditures :*

* It is within the recollection of most officers now serving that before “drawing stores,” they had to draw on their *imagination* for accidents, such as the carrying away of spars, splitting of sails, &c. In the same way to procure powder and shot for exercise, it was necessary to assume that it had been used for other purposes, duly set forth in the “log,” or ship’s journal. Such entry would stand thus :—“Daylight observed a strange sail, S.E. Fired a 32-pounder with blank cartridge to make her show her colours, 4^h 20^m fired another gun, 4^h 25^m fired a 32-pounder shotted, 4^h 30^m fired two ditto a-head of stranger.” The suspicious sail and all the rest being “mere creations of the fancy.” How far this system promoted economy is doubtful. As to the question of morals, it is to be hoped, for the sake of many good officers and honourable men, that these “white lies,” which Mrs. Opie herself could hardly condemn, will not rise up in judgment against them. A wiser liberality on the part of government has put a stop to this practice.

That we should, by way of *simplifying* public accounts, have assigned to every ship a number of imaginary seamen, under the name of "widows' men," in order that their pay should be carried to a particular charitable fund.

That these and similar vestiges of ruder times, but more practically injurious, should have so long held their ground is less surprising than it appears at first sight: *Prosperity is a bad teacher*, and more apt to give blind confidence, than to suggest improvement. Perhaps we are indebted to the few reverses of the American war for our first lessons in gunnery, as we certainly are for a better class of frigates and sloops; and to the lamentable events of 1797 we owe the correction of some scandalous frauds, and of some undeniable grievances of our seamen. Since the peace, the delay and difficulty of manning our ships has led to many good regulations for improving the condition of seamen, and had not our usual good fortune helped us out of some awkward scrapes, still more might have been done.

But while we may expect a progressive improvement in such matters of detail as come within the province of the Admiralty, there is one question of the highest importance, which

will probably be adjourned until some calamity forces it upon us. That question is—

“How is the fleet to be manned on the approach of war?”

The answer which would naturally suggest itself here, and would probably be made by most landsmen and even by many seamen, is—
“By the same means as formerly.” But simple as this answer seems, there are two material objections to it.

1st. No man living will answer, that by those means we should get our fleet to sea as early as the exigencies of our own position, and the arrangements of foreign powers, (to speak plainly, France,) in the present day would require, that is, before the enemy's fleet could put to sea.

2nd. No one can assert that, when our fleet *did* get to sea, the raw and undisciplined crews which impressment would give us would be able to cope with the trained seamen-gunners, which France, for instance, keeps in reserve.

But it is because our ancient methods of raising seamen have hitherto succeeded, that I express a doubt of our abandoning them until compelled. When did a country, so successful in war, ever change its system unless after defeat?

With no nation was it ever so vitally important

to have the means of dispatching her fleets promptly, as with England. Other countries have armies adequate to their protection, coast or frontier fortresses, internal defences, a reserve force of militia, and, in the case of France, a fortified capital: England, with none of these securities, for it is folly to say she could *extempore* them all in the moment of need, stakes every thing upon her fleet,—upon a fleet, too, we must remember, which has yet to be created. The strongest political reasons, also, as well as military, demand for us the power of acting promptly at all times. Our wide-spread dominions, and extensive commerce, give us innumerable points of contact with other nations, and, consequently, many jarring interests to defend. Though an island, so far from being *isolated*, we come into direct territorial contact with the United States*, France, Spain, Portugal, Russia and Holland, Mexico, and Brazil; while, indirectly, we may be said to be in contact with the whole globe. Perhaps, too, our colonies, torn from other states in war, and thus inflicting wounds on their national

* With France, in India and West Coast of Africa; Spain, at Gibraltar; Portugal, in India and East Coast of Africa; Russia, in North America; Holland, in Guyana; Mexico, in Honduras; and Brazil, in Guyana.

self-love, not yet healed, may render us more obnoxious to enmity.

But a stronger reason is to be found in the angry feeling towards England, which, unfortunately, pervades our nearest and most powerful neighbour; a feeling which would probably be our own, had the history of the last war been reversed, and it had been our fate to see our flag driven from the ocean, our colonies transferred to the enemy, and a long succession of defeats by land, terminated in the occupation of our capital, and a change of dynasty. But just as it is difficult to conceive bodily pain without feeling it, so we find it hard to comprehend the soreness of others under humiliations which Providence has spared us. It is only to be hoped, that, if we *did* entertain the hostile feelings which now possess our neighbours, we should at least refrain from giving them vent in unworthy slanders and abuse, which could be as easily as effectually retorted. While such a feeling exists, the seeds of war are already sown; and although the *entente cordiale* of two governments may in ordinary circumstances preserve peace, it wants but a breath to kindle the flames of war, and nothing would be more certain to supply that breath than any quarrel between England and a third power. The conduct of

the French nation in the "Right of Search" question, (not to say the French government, which acted under *constraint*,) clearly establishes this. Every one knows that there was no *real grievance* in the case, the injury done to French commerce was imaginary, the complaints against our cruizers were purely factious; but one week of naval war with America, unless we abandon the belligerent rights which we have maintained for centuries, would furnish France with more real causes of complaint against us, than fifty years of the slave treaties of 1831-32.

From some hints in a late speech of M. Guizot, it would seem that French neutrality in an American war would be conditional, on our surrendering those principles of maritime law which are essential to our well-being as a naval power. Rather than pay such a price for a friendship, above all others unstable and unproductive, it is to be hoped we shall dispense with it, as we have done in our wars heretofore.

The *entente cordiale* between England and France may be compared to a screen wisely interposed between two antagonistic substances, as fire and ice; it is wise to prevent the fire from thawing the ice, and the ice from extinguishing the fire, but it does not follow there is any congeniality between them, and as little of

true cordiality can there be between ourselves and France. We may wish to disbelieve the fact, but the whole French Press proclaims it; and, indeed, it is too apparent, even in the policy which the French government pursues on certain points where English interests only are concerned.*

A recent letter in the "Times" tells us, (apropos to the *report* that our coast defences would be commenced,) "How far this assertion is tenable, I am not qualified to judge, but I know that there is not a man in France who is not eternally occupied with calculating upon rivalling England at sea, and upon landing a desolating army upon her coast."

The view of the British alliance, which is taken in French naval circles, has already been illustrated, and though it is self-evident that no Frenchmen have less reason to love us than their naval officers, yet they show more good

* The obstacles which it is understood are opposed by the French government to increased facilities for our communication with the East Indies through Egypt is one instance, and just at this moment, it is said, operates very injuriously. In return for this obstruction we reject the offers of a *friendly power* (Austria), and leave our communications with the East to pass through France, subject to all the *tracasseries* of that government, as experienced at the time of the Cabul war.

sense and good feeling than the writers who profess to guide public opinion.

So much for the reciprocation of those amiable sentiments which English optimists imagine to pervade both countries, but of which, in spite of *Free Trade*, we enjoy a perfect monopoly.

CHAP. VIII.

THE QUESTION OF INVASION, AND OF MANNING THE FLEET
IN ANY SUDDEN EMERGENCY.

BONAPARTE asserted, and Thiers repeats*, that forty-eight hours of French mastery in the Channel would have sealed the fate of England. This may be untrue in respect of the period to which the assertion referred, for with a year's notice we could hardly have been unprepared; but as regards the present moment, or the commencement of *any* war, I see no grounds to doubt it.

That our few regiments would make all the resistance which could be expected from their numbers, and more than would be made by an equal number of any other country, I have enough of British feeling to believe. But the army, excluding the thirty thousand men, at

* Thiers tells us (in his fifth volume) that our soldiers and militia could not have encountered the army that conquered Europe; yet our soldiers *did* (not in England, but in France and Spain,) encounter that army, and in a dozen pitched battles vanquish it too.

least, which the peculiar species of "loyalty" inculcated in Ireland would demand for that country, could not exceed twenty or twenty-five thousand disposable men.

The pensioners, also, (those at least who have retained their limbs, and are not much crippled by lumbago,) might be useful; but to speak of a "warlike peasantry" (what weapon do they excel in?) taking any part in the short and sharp contest that would decide the fate of England, or at least of the capital, is madness. Under peculiar circumstances an armed peasantry may greatly harass and impede an invading army; but in England the two most essential circumstances—*time* and *space* to act in—would be wanting. A force landing in Sussex would, by *two days'* march, through a country untraversed by mountains, rivers, marshes, or forests, reach London. In so short a march there would be no room for the desultory operations of an armed peasantry to produce any effect. They might harass the enemy's rear, or annoy his flanks; but to commit peasants in action against regular troops, would be to ensure their total and irretrievable dispersion, and possibly to compromise the regular troops with which they acted. People, forgetting the difference between a march on London and a march on Moscow, are apt to

deceive themselves, and mistify the matter, by talking about "cutting off an enemy's supplies," and "intercepting his communications." There would be no question of either in the present case. The troops would carry their own provisions (as they do now for much longer marches in Algeria) on their backs, and as to intercepting communications, there would be none to intercept. An invading force advancing on the metropolis would never think of keeping open its communication with the coast. If successful, it would be needless; if unsuccessful, impossible. In the same manner, we overrate the difficulty of finding means of transport, by supposing the whole *matériel* of an army—its commissariat, baggage, siege-artillery, and pontoon trains,—to be inseparable from it. So far from this being the case, an army advancing on London would not encumber itself with any of the four above-named trains. As already stated, the commissariat would be on the backs of the soldiers. Baggage does not *accompany* an army actively engaged; siege-artillery would be useless where there is nothing to besiege, and pontoon trains, where there are no rivers to cross. Now the transport of an army divested of these incumbrances is a very simple matter. Having assisted in the embarkation and landing of several

thousand troops in steamers, I can speak confidently on this point. During the late civil war in Spain, the royal armies were repeatedly conveyed from point to point by a few British war steamers, the largest of which was what is *now* considered a small steam sloop. The number of troops conveyed at one time in her Majesty's steamers Phoenix and Salamander, (under 700 tons) varied from 1000 to 1300. Each soldier carried his arms with him, *and often landed with every thing necessary to take the field for four days*. It is to be observed, too, that this was in the Bay of Biscay, frequently during the *winter*, and sometimes in very bad weather. If we allow for the greatly increased size of war-steamers in the present day, we may suppose them to average 1100 tons, and to carry 1500 men each upon the upper deck, leaving, as was the case on the occasions referred to, the lower deck for other purposes. Thus ten sloops of average size would carry for a short distance and in fine weather 15,000 men; each steam sloop again would tow tonnage, whether in one or more ships, for as many troops as she carried on board, making another 15,000, or a total of 30,000 men embarked in, or towed by ten steam sloops.*

* The troops are here supposed to be *infantry*, of which

I know this statement will seem incredible from its very simplicity, but it rests upon experience admitting of no doubt, and could be corroborated by the officers who commanded the steamers referred to.

The difficulty of transport then, is imaginary. The opposition to the landing of troops, covered by the heavy fire of shipping, is seldom effectual, and would probably be avoided by the suddenness of the expedition, or by a feint on another part of the coast. The success of an army, once landed, is matter of speculation; but supposing the chances *four to one against it*, still, considering *the stakes played for*—an army against the ruin of a kingdom,—the game would be but equal.

It is an unpopular, and, perhaps, in a selfish point of view, *impolitic* thing, coolly to reason upon a supposition, which most Englishmen indignantly reject as insulting and impossible. I sympathise with and honour this gallant feeling, but should like to see it rest upon *substance* not on *shadows*—upon the *efficient training* of our yeomanry and citizens, not upon the useless

an invading army, to be successful in England, *ought* to be chiefly composed. The transport of horses is a more difficult matter, yet by no means the mountainous obstacle people *like* to think.

valour of undisciplined masses, upon a militia in *esse*, not in *posse*. Were these the days

“Of the strong Norman lance and the gallant English bow,”

were the battle to be decided by the strong arms and gallant hearts of England, led on by her loyal chivalry,—we should not ask whether the enemy approached with three times our numbers as at Crecy, or four times our numbers as at Poitiers and at Azincour. The very idea that a foeman profaned our soil would give us quadruple strength, and “St. George for merrie England!” Down with the invader!

But alas! these are the days bewailed by the matchless knight of La Mancha: when the vile minerals, dug out of the bowels of the earth, leave no difference between us but what discipline makes.

The recent battles on the Sutlej forcibly show the inefficacy of personal prowess and valour, however great, when opposed to discipline. In a letter now before me, the opinion of a person very well acquainted with Indian affairs, is thus given:—“The Seiks are the *finest men* in the world, and if thoroughly disciplined, no European troops could stand a moment before them. Imagine an army with every soldier a hero, in the ancient acceptation of the term, who never

parts with his arms even when in prison: they are handed down from father to son for generations, and if lost by any chance the man generally kills himself."

Contrast such men with our army of gentle rice-eating Hindoos (backed, it is true, by a few sturdy Saxons, and led on by British officers), and the overwhelming value of discipline will be seen. But then we did not *extemporise* our army in India, and a battle or two upon an average every year keeps us in a state of preparation in that quarter, which we certainly are not in England, notwithstanding the clever and agreeable view of the matter taken by the "Examiner." A recent article in that paper, which often contains the soundest criticisms on naval and military matters, bears the captivating heading of "England's love of peace and readiness for war." The "love of peace," to the honour of Great Britain, is indeed unquestionable; but the "readiness for war" is more doubtful perhaps. *When* the army is increased by the additional force proposed; *when* the militia is in existence (even on paper); *when* the harbours of refuge, so *strongly* urged upon government by the most competent authorities, are finished; *when*, above all, we can *man* a squadron of line-of-battle ships

as quickly as we can fit them out,—the boast may be as true as it is popular.

From this digression on the use which an enemy might make of a temporary superiority in the Channel, let us turn to his chances of obtaining it. Here, as elsewhere, my observations will apply to the *commencement* of a war only, and have no reference to the particular government which might then exist, but to the system which, in case of war, the constitution of the country, public opinion, and ancient customs, would lead *any* government to adopt. Whatever sanction past events might seem to give this system, I cannot help regarding it as *utterly unsuited* to the present day, and, to take the lowest standard in military matters, inadequate even for *defence*.

The experience of 1840, and again of 1844 (the Tahiti business), under two different governments, warrants the belief that no actual preparations for war would be made until war itself was inevitable and might be hourly declared. How long a period would elapse from the commencement of such preparations until our fleet was at sea, it is impossible to guess even.

It should be needless to say that no inference whatever, on this point, can be drawn from the

recent experiments* with two complete and well-trained ships' companies†, in fitting out advanced ships. Those experiments could never have been intended by the Admiralty to test any thing else but the capacity of the two crews and their officers; and in this respect, the result was satisfactory. But it is an instance of our proneness to self-deception, that some newspapers held up the experiment as a proof of the expedition with which a whole fleet could be fitted for sea, *omitting the previous question*, how soon it could be *manned*!

Supposing the necessity for equipping a fleet (that is, the certainty of war) to arrive, during the recess of parliament, I believe that government have not the power of issuing press warrants, or even of offering a bounty. Here might be a delay of, at least, a fortnight. But allowing both those methods of procuring seamen to be in operation, while we limit the bounty (?) to five pounds‡, it is hardly to be supposed that an able seaman will rate himself at half the value

* The experiment of fitting out two line-of-battle ships, by employing the crews of two ships already in commission for the purpose.

† The respective crews of the Albion and Rodney.

‡ This was the sum paid through the last war, and the precedent was followed in 1840; of course without success.

of a drummer-boy. The press-gangs will bring us *men*, but not the *hearts* and *wills*, which animated the Rodney's and Albion's seamen the other day, and which, according to the old naval proverb, would have made each "one volunteer worth two pressed men."

The time of fitting out our fleet, however, be it long or short, will be one of serious and painful responsibility to the heads of departments, and of harassing anxiety to all subordinates. With impressment must of course come all those unpopular restrictions, and the consequent discontent, which have before now converted our ships of war into jails and their officers into jailers. Happy the commanding officers whose ships having been some time in commission, and being manned with cheerful volunteers, will present a pleasing contrast to those manned through the press-gang.

While the drafts of sullen-looking pressed men, closely guarded, are gradually arriving at the sea-ports, and a few smock-frocked peasants from the workhouse, with a sprinkling of "civil power" gentlemen, strongly recommended by the magistrates, are slowly making up the force upon which the fate of England is to depend, we may imagine the urgent exhortations to despatch which will be addressed by the Admi-

rality to the port admiral, and by the latter to the different captains. But whatever be their zeal, they cannot *create* men, and will have, in some cases, to represent the worthlessness of those that are raised, and to request their discharge. One captain will report that his crew are positive pigmies—King John's men, averaging four feet ten, and being ordered to weigh them, will return them as "under jockey-weight."* Another will represent, that out of 600 "blue-jackets," he has not twenty seamen.† While a far greater number will prefer going to sea half manned, on the chance of picking up crews from merchant ships before meeting an enemy.

I have made no mention here of any force already in commission, for its existence is always uncertain : the eight sail of the line which we have had (partially manned) for the last twelve months, can not, unfortunately, be looked on as a permanent force. The apologies made for that small squadron (a stray infant in a nunnery, or a collection of fire ships in Portsmouth harbour, would

* This, we are told by Admiral Griffiths, actually happened last war in the case of H.M.S. "Stirling Castle" 74; when commanded by Sir Home Popham. One or two hundred were discharged accordingly.

† This also happened.

not have *demand*ed more), makes it clear that we rose above the "normal state" of our navy, when we collected eight sail together on our own shores.

Perhaps if we take *three* full-manned line-of-battle ships, it may represent our *average* force in or near England, and even *this* force cannot properly be spoken of as the "nucleus" of a larger fleet, for according to the regulations of the navy, seamen are not transferable from one ship to another. A defect in our system of this nature would perhaps be remedied in war, but not at the *commencement* of a contest.

Let us now, pending the fitting out, or rather the manning, of our fleet, cast our eyes across the Channel. The seamen composing the *compagnies permanentes* are quietly marched from their quarters and embarked in their respective ships—suppose sixteen sail of the line. Foreign commerce being entirely suspended, and the "inscription maritime" having rendered every seaman both available and *come-at-able*, the crews are speedily completed even without the "conscription." There is no bludgeoning, and consequently no ill blood. France not being blessed with philosophical writers to inspire men with aversion to the service of their country, her seamen obey cheerfully the call of duty, and (as

often happens) superior organisation makes up for, comparatively, scanty resources. Whether the French fleet would put to sea before our own, I do not pretend to judge, but there seems to be no particular reason why it should not—that is to say, within the limits of the force provided for by their peace-time arrangements.

Let it be remembered here too, for the fact is all-important; of the merchant seamen whose services France would require in her fleet, the far greater number have already served in *her* navy, while, with us, not four sailors in a hundred have done so. The last *Rapport au Roi* on the French navy shows that from 1835 to 1844 (both included) 55,517 seamen have answered the calls of the annual *levée permanente*, while the *whole* number of able seamen is but 46,000.

CHAP. IX.

GLANCE AT A FLEET MANNED IN HASTE, AND WITH
UNDISCIPLINED CREWS.

It will, perhaps, give a clearer view of the practical difficulties, which a hastily organised fleet will have to contend against, when it is manned, if we suppose ourselves accompanying the British channel fleet to sea. Let us conceive ourselves, then, at Spithead, where the fleet, the last ship having just joined, is proceeding to sea. The parting salute is fired from the Portsmouth batteries, and as the white smoke rolls forth from the noble flag-ship in return, a loud heart-felt British cheer bursts out spontaneously from ten thousand spectators on the shore. The garrison bands strike up the spirit-stirring national air which (though our philosophers teach us we should be as indifferent to it as to the "*Pari-sienne*,") still finds some response in our bosoms. As the sounds are wafted off to the fleet, a living cloud darkens the rigging, the air rings with the loud hurras of the seamen, and for one moment, at least, even the pressed men

enter into the enthusiasm of the scene. There is a warm thrill at the heart on such occasions, like nothing else in life, neither to be described nor forgotten.

As the French fleet in Brest is understood to be fitting for sea with all despatch, and the wind is light, the commander-in-chief makes the signal for steamers to tow ; and now the fleet, urged by the united force of wind and steam, is hastening to the hostile shores of France, and perhaps into immediate action with the enemy. There is no "waiting for a fair wind" to get out of harbour in these days.

As a matter of course, John Bull has been vastly indignant at the delay in the sailing of the fleet, which, though a necessary consequence of his adherence to a worn-out system, he charitably attributes to the Admiralty, and the commander-in-chief of their selection. The opposition papers have declared the delay "scandalous," the want of foresight "quite incredible," and the admiral little better than a poltroon. It does not occur to the accusers that much time must be lost by our hap-hazard system, and still less that the fleet may, after all, have only sailed *too soon*, considering its unprepared state.

The fleet being now fairly at sea, and in quest of the enemy, there is no time to be lost in

teaching the crews the first rudiments of those duties on which success entirely depends, and to which nineteen-twentieths of them must be utter strangers. As the few men-of-war's-men unemployed would at the breaking out of a war volunteer for cruizers, rather than ships-of-the-line, on account of prize-money, the crews of the latter would consist of merchant-sailors, landsmen, and perhaps a company or two of infantry, as the marine corps*, would only furnish one-fourth of the strength required. Allowing that each ship had a small sprinkling of men who had served in the royal navy, it is still evident that many guns must be committed to those who have no idea how to use them. To teach such men their exercise is not the work of a *day*, or a *week*: it would be easier to extemporise infantry or artillery on shore, than efficient gunners afloat. Yet it is only to our seamen we look for the practice of that which they have never learned.

We will suppose, then, that the first spare moment after the fleet has sailed† has been

* It appears that 40,000 *soldiers*, marines included, were employed in the navy last war. The present strength of the marine corps is 10,500. In France the marines and marine artillery together are 19,000 strong.

† It is impossible, as all naval men know, to spare any

seized upon to quarter the ship's company, and that with infinite zeal and industry the officers have taught their men the guns to which they belong, and their respective numbers and denominations at them. Even this simple lesson, however, evaporates from the soft heads of some smock-frocked peasants during the night.

The first night has passed away, a night of sorrowful regret to the young landmen, of gloom to the pressed seamen, of high hopes to the younger officers, and careful reflection to the elder. Blithe morning finds the gallant fleet (yet oh how different in efficiency from what it will be in a few months, if the fates permit!) still urging its course to the hostile shores. There is a slight swell, and the detachment of H. M. 150th (newly raised), together with the smock-frocks, though not quite sea-sick, look what is termed "rather seedy."

The bells of the fleet are striking two (that is nine A. M. by Shrewsbury clock), and the quick eyes of the signal midshipmen have detected three little bundles rapidly ascending to the flagship's main royal mast-head. The small bundles burst, and display three bright-hued flags, which

time from the necessary duties of fitting out for exercise. Besides, the crew is then incomplete, and perhaps the guns not embarked.

duly interpreted, mean "exercise great guns and small arms with shot." A stir and bustle succeeds the announcement; and while the drums and fifes are playing "Hearts of Oak," the men hurry to their quarters, but with much of awkwardness, and not little mutual obstruction. Some landmen,

" Whose wits are in the corn-fields,
Whose wits are not here,"

have forgotten the guns they are stationed at, and one such wanderer being recognised is called to his quarters; but the landmark he had chosen overnight to assist his memory is unhappily removed,—it was the portable fire-engine, and he shakes his head negatively.

With some shuffling and confusion the guns' crews have got into their places, and wait for orders.

Let us fix our eyes on a particular gun. It is the tenth gun on the middle deck of H. M.'s ship Neptune, 120, and the few trained hands having been quartered either on the lower or upper deck, the guns' crew are all novices. Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, are merchant-sailors, chiefly pressed men; 8, and 9, are young recruits of the 150th; 10, and 11, are rustics from Somersetshire, with flaxen hair and pudding-

heads; 12, is an Irish hodman; 13, a cockney pickpocket "under a cloud." A young midshipman of fifteen from Eton, who has fortunately learned his own gun exercise*, is the instructor. With the sanguine confidence of youth, he imagines that *his* subdivision will soon attain perfection, forgetting the many weeks of hard work which such knowledge cost himself; but there is up-hill work before him. He has got the guns' crews to call their numbers right. "Zomersetshire" at first insisted upon calling "vour hundred and vifty-five," which was his number on the "watch-bill;" and the Irishman roars out "A tousand and ten," because it is his number on the "ship's books." No. 3. has learned that the powder should precede the shot: he had previously laboured under the contrary impression. No. 6. has learned to present the right end of the rammer to No. 4., though in doing so he picks the teeth of No. 3., and gives 5. a black eye, receiving his blessing in return.

* Of *all* the improvements of modern days (and they are many), the greatest is making the officers *learn practically* the exercise they are supposed to teach the men. Why is the *old* practice of making the young midshipmen exercise "aloft" going out as the other practice is coming in? If their numbers be too few to reef or furl a sail by *themselves*, what objection is there to exercising them *with* the ship's boys?

No. 4. has succeeded in ramming home, after losing one rammer overboard (as he is a pressed man, this is set down to sulkiness, and he is black-listed accordingly). The gun is loaded and run out (over the toes of No. 8., who is carried off forthwith). The young midshipman giving the "detail" has explained that "at the word *point!* No. 1. retires to the full extent of the trigger-line." This No. 1. performs to the letter, evidently wishing the trigger-line twice as long; but he is not so successful in placing himself properly. The attempt to "lean well over on the right knee, keeping the left foot well clear of the recoil," produces a grotesque attitude, resembling a spread eagle, or a clown's on the stage, and the effort to "look steadily along the sight" causes terrible contortions of his countenance, with the shutting of the *wrong* eye.

By the time the word "ready" is given, No. 1. has shut both his eyes, and stands grinning fearfully, like the original Saracen's head. The country bumpkins have improved on the example of "No. 1. the captain," and while shutting their eyes, they also stop their ears with their thumbs, thus exhausting the remaining patience of the young Etonian. At last the word "fire!" is given, and No. 1., who has been

warned to "spring up to the safety position on the left," does it so effectually, as to make "a cannon" off the left rear-man, and pocket himself down the hatchway. Some of the other numbers have also sprung up to the "safety position," not quite certain as to what direction the guns usually recoil in, and the bumpkins are still standing open-mouthed, in expectation of a *second* explosion. In the mean time, although no enemy is in sight, there is a fair average of wounded, through their own clumsiness, and a young assistant-surgeon is heard to say of a man with a ghastly-looking compound fracture, "It will make a *vara* pretty case of amputation." A few shells have exploded, through want of skill in those who handled them, which leads to a "general order" against their use, except where artillery-men or seamen-gunners are embarked.

A signal from the flag-ship closes the exercise, which has been got through, as is said of ladies under certain circumstances, "as well as can be expected," yet certainly not as well as might have been wished. Thus ends the first essay with raw crews, who, nevertheless, only want time and practice to make them perfect. Are they sure of either?

The commander-in-chief, who is too sensible a

man to complain of that which his experience led him to expect, has nevertheless quietly observed to the captain of the fleet, "It is just as well that this day's practice was not against an enemy." He has also required reports from the different gunnery officers of the time which they consider will be necessary for the instruction of each ship's company in the gun exercise, and of the number of men in each ship who already know it. The average time required is reported at three or four weeks, with daily practice, and the average number of instructed men in each ship at thirty. This suggests some weighty reflections. The admiral is about to quit the deck, when the flag-captain reports, "Beelzebub repeating signal from Lucifer, sir! for several strange sail in the south-east." The admiral hereupon stops short, and directs his eyes to the poop, where a whole battery of spy-glasses are directed to the repeating steamer.

A low report of a distant gun calls attention to a look-out frigate, who, with her top-gallant sheets let fly, has just made the well-known signal for a fleet, and at the same time the "loom" of the land is discovered, and reported to be Ushant. The fleet has lost no time in reaching its station, and apparently has only arrived at the moment of need. The fastest

steamers thrown out like skirmishers, and supported by a light squadron, have now approached the strangers sufficiently to reconnoitre their force, which they communicate by signal, and the admiral, from their number, judges that the Brest ships have been joined by the "squadron of evolutions," probably the most efficient force ever possessed by France, well commanded, well officered, and with thoroughly trained crews. He would prefer meeting them with *half* his present fleet, *properly manned* and disciplined; but there is no choice, and he determines to bring them to action as soon as possible. Numerous sails emerging from the horizon become visible at each moment, for the two fleets approach in opposite courses, and a few hours will bring them into conflict. Earnestly is every eye turned to the east, and from each mast-head the younger officers with spy-glasses are striving to anticipate the information which so brief a space will reveal. From the approaching foe other eyes are turned to the flag-ship, from whence the signals big with fate must come. But the admiral, a man of few words, and quick decision, has settled in his own mind that complicated manœuvres would be unsuited to a fleet so ill-organised, and is sparing of his telegraph. At last the cry is heard on the poop of each ship,

“Signal going up a-board the flag-ship!” and a thousand earnestly inquiring looks turn in that direction. It is a single blue and yellow pendant, conveying the important intelligence that — “There will be time for the fleet to dine.” A laugh follows this anti-heroic, but very practical communication: Englishmen fight best on full diet. The youngest seamen quickly swallow their meal, and return to gaze on the first real specimen of “the enemy” they have ever seen. The elder take their time, and on returning to the upper deck, find the advanced squadron of the enemy not more than four or five miles distant. The main body of the hostile fleet, still formed in two lines, or order of sailing, are now observed to change their formation. At a signal from their admiral, the two lines are formed into one, with a quickness and precision which leaves no doubt as to the presence of the “squadron of evolutions.” As the line is formed they alter course, so as to extend at right angles to the approaching British columns, and with the western sun shining on their lofty sails, and long extended tiers, present to view a formidable and accurate line-of-battle. Each ship then simultaneously shortens sail, and at the same instant the well-known “Tricolor” streams from every peak, in token of defiance. The challenge is

answered by the display of the "meteor flag of England," and the drums of the fleet again give out their loud summons to quarters. It is the second time only to most that now hear that summons. It will be the last to many a one.

The admiral has previously intimated his intention of adopting Nelson's plan of attack in two columns, not wishing to make a first experiment of manœuvring, in presence of the enemy, and hoping the chances of a *pêle-mêle* may, in some degree, compensate for want of training in the men and experience in fleet manœuvres of the captain. The fleet is now about two miles from the enemy, and as the admiral bears away with a view to cut through their line near the centre, he makes the Nelsonian signal, "England expects that every man will do his duty." Oh! that such a signal should be addressed to men who never had a chance even, of learning it! When the heads of the British columns are still three quarters of a mile distant the enemy's centre ships open fire; but not with the bootless cannonade, through which Nelson and Collingwood approached the Franco-Spanish fleet for twenty minutes at Trafalgar, almost uninjured. The perfection of modern gunnery does not admit of the plan of attack, which the hero knew would succeed in his day,

and a ship bearing down on the broadsides of a whole fleet, as the *Victory* and *Royal Sovereign* did at *Trafalgar*, would be either disabled or destroyed.

The British fleet, however, moves on silent and stern, the signal for close action flying on board the divisional flag-ships. Several shells have exploded in the bows of the leading ships, and "concussion shells" on one bow, between wind and water, with "percussion" shells on the other, have made irreparable breaches, and obliged them to quit the line. The next ships now become the leading ships, share the same fate from being totally dismasted, and several others have suffered severely before returning a shot. At last the British leading ships pass through the enemy's line, and in doing so, have an opportunity of discharging their hitherto reserved broadsides with deadly effect; but this they lose from want of training and skill.* The

* Such a case actually occurred in the action between the British frigate *Java* and the American frigate *Constitution*. (See *James*, vol. vi. p. 129.) The crew of the former being chiefly raw landsmen, lost the opportunity which the skill of their gallant Captain Lambert afforded them, of firing a broadside into their opponent's stern. The fate of the British frigate (which was of course captured) is an example of the difference which practice makes in two ships' companies. She was fresh from port for the first time.

battle now begins with all its fury ; the motley crews of the British ships displaying bull-dog courage and zeal ; but a “zeal without knowledge ;” for what can be expected from men in action, who have not learned to acquit themselves tolerably even in exercise ? With blunders, awkwardness, and accidents, amidst the exhortations, entreaties, and invectives, of the officers, the untrained crews keep up a slow ineffectual fire. What would not even *three good men to each gun have then been worth ?* Meantime, the disciplined gunners of the enemy’s fleet, firing as trained men will do, three times as fast and far more effectually*, have made havoc among the British quarters ; and though the action has lasted but twenty minutes, several ships—such is modern gunnery—have foundered or blown up. But why pursue the subject ? one would not, even in imagination, desire to dwell upon the humiliation of our flag. Suffice it to conceive that our fleet makes all the resistance to be expected from hastily collected crews utterly uninstructed in the use of their weapons—all the resistance which untrained valour can oppose to

* The difference between trained and untrained crews, in celerity of fire, is probably *under-stated* here. As to efficacy of fire, no real comparison is possible ; as a very competent judge observed to the writer.

steady discipline. Yet would the result be doubtful?

It may be objected that an imaginary case is not an argument. It certainly is not; but it may be a fair illustration of the consequences likely to result from certain facts, and those facts I conceive to have been fairly stated. So far, at least, as the nature of the crews, we must expect to collect for our own fleet, I have only supposed that to happen which *has* happened, and, as far as we can see, *must happen again* under our present system. Of the crews, which would man a French fleet, I am less able to judge; but it is my impression that, for sixteen sail of the line, they have, at all times, a sufficient supply of *well trained gunners*. It is a circumstance highly favourable to a French fleet, also, that a very large portion of the *merchant* seamen must have already served in the royal navy*, and there acquired a knowledge of their military duties. This results from the disproportionate number of seamen employed by the state, as compared with those in the employ of commerce. With us, the

* By a report from Baron Tupinier to the minister of marine in 1838, it would appear that the whole number of merchant seamen must pass through the royal navy in *nine* years. The proportion of seamen then employed by the state was not *half* what it is now.

state employs about one seaman in eight, while in France, the state employs one in *two*. Thus our very *strength is a cause of our weakness*, while the *weakness of France is a cause of her strength*. England, with, *probably*, 350,000 seamen, has fewer *trained* men than France with 100,000. It may also be observed here, that, notwithstanding the numerical superiority in ships, which England has long possessed, there is no improbability in supposing a contest with an equal, or even a superior, French fleet. Our principal naval victories of last war, and even those on which the question of invasion depended, were decided by the prowess of our seamen against a *superior* force. Yet we had more ships than France at that time, just as we have now. A naval historian of last war, after noticing the despatch of a French squadron of line-of-battle ships to the West Indies, "In a week or two, after the declaration of war," writes, "the necessity, on the part of England, for detaching squadrons, *in the first instance*, to the stations at a distance from home, occasioned some time to *elapse* before a British fleet could be got ready, of sufficient strength, to cope with the French fleets in Quiberon Bay," &c.

It is more easy to imagine a British defeat at sea, than the sensation it would produce in

England. A British admiral striking his flag to a French fleet! There is no precedent in history for such humiliation. It is among the proud traditions of our navy, that in our innumerable conflicts with that power, no flag-officer ever lowered his flag to the foe, and among our own seamen there is a belief that an English admiral is not *permitted* to do so. According to the version current among them, Admiral Byng was the only exception, and he, as they think, was "shot for striking his flag." Though poor Byng, however, was guiltless of this fault, (he would, indeed, have had no excuse for it in his skirmish,) there are, I believe, two instances on record of British admirals having struck their flags; one 255, the other 180 years ago.* How boundless, then, would be the popular indigna-

* The capture of Sir R. Grenville, in the year 1591, was marked by traits of heroism which have never been surpassed, and which, considering that the enemy's (Spanish) force was fifty-five ships to seven British, almost reconcile us to the misfortune. Sir Richard was Vice-Admiral under Lord Thomas Howard, and being unwilling to retreat, continued the engagement *singly*, from three in the afternoon until next morning, repulsing the enemy's boarders several times, and causing them a loss of four ships, and 1000 men. When at last overpowered, he proposed setting fire to the magazine but was prevented by part of the crew. He died of his wounds, saying with his last breath—"Here die I, Richard

tion against the unhappy man who brought such a stain upon our arms — against those who appointed him, and all who appeared responsible for the disaster !

How would public credit be shaken to its foundations, and how utterly would all our confidence in “ Kentish hedge-rows,” “ warlike peasantry,” and other fanciful substitutes for disciplined men, vanish into thin air ! How unmeasured would be the exultation of our rivals, at a *real* victory over England, and what sympathy would that exultation meet with in that amiable assembly, whose watchword is, “ England’s adversity is Ireland’s opportunity !”

Perhaps cool reflection would, after a time, convince us that such a catastrophe was less *unaccountable* than it would at first sight appear, and that it came not upon us without some intelligible warnings, unhappily neglected. Was not the affair of 1840 a warning ? Was

Grenville, with a quiet and a joyful mind, for that I have ended my life as a true *soldier* ought, fighting for his queen, religion, country, and honor ; and my soul willingly departing from my body, leaving behind the lasting fame of having behaved as every valiant soldier is IN DUTY BOUND TO DO.” A true type of our Blakes, Benbows, and Nelsons, in later times. Near a hundred years later, in 1666, Sir G. Ayscue having run aground on the Galloper shoal, during a *four days’* engagement with the Dutch, was forced to strike his flag.

not M'Cleod's affair? Was not Tahiti? We are told, that in 1840 Thiers meditated a *coup de main**, either against Malta, then insufficiently garrisoned, or our fleet, so badly manned. Could we have prevented it? Had we a reserve of seamen, enough for four line-of-battle ships even, a reserve such as the "coast-guard" once afforded us? But the quarrel did *not* take an unfavorable turn, and we give ourselves the credit of averting a danger we were utterly unprepared for. Providence does wonders for us, and we draw largely on Providence.

* The Quarterly Review for March last, in an article on the state of our army, evidently written by a military man, says, p. 529, "What would have become of Malta, for example, had the quarrel between Lord Palmerston and M. Thiers deepened but a little? There was a critical time, when the harbour of Valetta could not show so much as a sloop of war within its anchorage. The guns on the ramparts, besides being of small calibre, had become through age and the effect of the weather well-nigh unserviceable; of artillery-men there were scarce sufficient to fire a double salute; and the infantry of the garrison consisted of a weak battalion. What would have happened had the French fleet from the Dardanelles suddenly steered, as was expected by both parties, in a hostile spirit thither? Indeed, what would have taken place in England itself, had the 20,000 men whom the French are *known* to have kept in hand, embarked suddenly?" &c. &c.

The "weak battalion," here spoken of, must not be understood as the only infantry in all Malta, but probably in the town of Valetta only.

CHAP. X.

THE REMEDIES FOR SUCH EVILS AS MIGHT RESULT FROM
THE DELAY IN MANNING THE FLEET, AND FROM HAVING
UNTRAINED CREWS, ARE IN OUR OWN POWER.

BUT should such unprecedented disaster befall us, it is consolatory to know that the remedy lies with ourselves. Our complaints, though of a nature which often proves dangerous, are not hopeless. They are a "plethora" of resources (what the French call *l'embarras des richesses*), and too long continued prosperity. We have *only* 350,000 seamen, which accounts for the difficulty of manning our ships even in peace-time. We have been free from invasion for 800 years. Victorious at sea for two centuries, we are rich in the spoils of the world, and *therefore* we are unwilling to provide for our own defence. But adversity would remedy the evil, and a single disaster at sea (though disasters *seldom come single*) would at once cure our over-confidence, and banish that apathy, which is our bane. We should then at once decide, *either* to maintain, at home and abroad, that *preponderating* naval force

which our safety and position require, or else we should ensure the means of speedily obtaining a supply of efficient seamen when wanted.

There may no doubt be reasons of state which make it expedient that our navy in commission should at times be reduced below the force maintained by other countries. Perhaps (as when we withdrew our line-of-battle ships from the "French Lake," formerly Mediterranean,) it may be an attempt to soothe the jealousy of another power, though leaving a freer scope to its *friendly* and *unambitious* policy. Perhaps it may be to confirm the earnest disavowal of any claim to naval superiority on the part of Great Britain, which the prime minister lately made, and supported by a Virgilian quotation*, a quotation, by the by, which some think would have been better applied in the sense it was actually used by Neptune, who was far too sensible a god to speak of *resigning* his trident; he knew that a god out of office was very likely to become out at elbows also, and therefore retained the trident, until he thought he saw in Britannia a worthy heiress to the "Imperium pelagi."

But though a minister may disavow our naval

* "Non illi imperium pelagi sævumque Tridentem,
Sed mihi sorte datum."

supremacy in words, or abandon it in peace-time, it would fare ill with him were he found unprepared to make it good in the first week of actual war. Nevertheless, I take it for granted that those who have the best means of judging see cause for what they do.

If, therefore, there *are* reasons against our maintaining such a force in peace-time, as would give us the mastery on all points, upon the breaking out of war, it is the more necessary we should be prepared for making any sudden exertion. Every naval man is aware that on *one* point we are never so prepared, that nothing can be more unsatisfactory than our system of procuring seamen, nothing so glaring as the disproportion between the enormous number of sailors we possess, and our power of rendering them available. Even in ordinary circumstances, unless when paying off one ship facilitates the manning of another, it takes us months to man a single line-of-battle ship; and, as to making a "naval demonstration," either to support our own policy, or to meet the demonstration of another government, we have not the power. We may expedite the material fitting of a fleet; we may move ships about our harbours, put their masts in, and call them "Demonstration," or "Advanced Ships." We may even fit them for sea; for the

dock-yard men can do all that; but when fitted, there they must remain for months*, waiting for seamen. Foreign powers are quite aware of this; for it is the duty of their consuls at our ports to inform their governments, and they must laugh at the "Demonstration," by which John Bull plays off a trick *upon himself*. This is a serious evil; but far from irremediable: it admits of different remedies, some of which have been already suggested by high authority, and the worst of the proposed remedies would be better than the present system. It is true there are difficulties in the way of each proposal; "there is a lion in the path, saith the sluggard;" but, as before asserted, *all these difficulties would vanish after one reverse at sea.*

It has been proposed to enter seamen for a term of years, as, for instance, seven, instead of for a particular ship, as at present. The obstacle is their repugnance to entering in this way, instead of choosing their own ships; and this is a serious practical difficulty. At the same time, considering the great importance of having a per-

* By taking some exceptional cases where ships have been hastened in their manning, this might be contradicted; but I affirm it is a fact, that line-of-battle ships take from three to six months completing their complements *on an average*.

manent body of disposeable seamen to form the "nucleus" of a larger force, the difficulty should not deter us. It would no doubt be necessary to offer some additional inducements, whether in the shape of present pay, future pension, eligibility to petty officers' ratings or to situations in the coast-guard, dock-yards, victualling offices, &c. If accompanied by such inducements, the offer were made to the *best seamen only* to enroll themselves in such manner, beginning with those now serving in her Majesty's Navy, it is probable that a considerable number would accept it. A body of the kind, however small, once formed and understood to consist of the *élite* of our seamen, would not fail to increase. Its future completion to any amount might be provided for, if, in entering boys, of whom there is never any scarcity, they were required to sign articles engaging to serve as permanent seamen, if selected after being rated. As the boys brought up in the navy, those at least who are fit for it, generally remain in ships of war, we might thus insure a future supply from their ranks. The "seamen-gunners" now entered in the *Excellent* furnish an example on a small scale of the permanent corps here proposed. They are liable to serve in any ship for which they may be selected, and do practically form the only

shadow of a reserve, which we possess. It is said, however, that several have deserted, and carried to America the valuable knowledge acquired in the *Excellent*, at least, the following story is *current*:— A British naval officer visiting an American man-of-war, asked one of the officers whether they had any “seamen-gunners,” as *instructors* for the crew. The answer was, “O yes, plenty!” “Have you any school for forming them?” “Yes!” “Where is the school, pray?” “On board the *Excellent* in Portsmouth harbour” (laughing).

If such a system were adopted, it would perhaps be desirable that seamen should be regularly “attested,” as in the army; not as an effectual remedy for desertion, but as some check on the extreme levity with which seamen now desert when the caprice seizes them.* The fact is, the *esprit de corps* which binds men to their profession, must be wanting where seamen look upon themselves as mere “birds of passage,”

* The writer actually heard a seaman once, a very young hand, give his *reasons* to his hearers for “running” (deserting) from *several* ships. From one, “because they were always holy-stoning decks.” From another, “because she was too short-handed.” From a third, after a pause to *recollect* the *weighty* motive, “because I was tired of her, and I thought I should try a change.” A clear proof that he had no very strong motive.

hired for a brief term, and not distinguished from those in private employ.

With respect to the difficulty of inducing merchant seamen to volunteer for the Queen's service, it arises either from ignorant misconception as to the severity of its discipline, or from the intentional misrepresentation of interested persons, such as crimps, lodging-house keepers, and discharged bad characters. It is the interest of the "crimps," men who earn their livelihood by procuring seamen for merchant ships, to deter them from entering the Queen's service, and this they use all their ingenuity to effect. Nor is their success at all surprising, when we consider that the *apparent* advantages are all on the side of the merchant ship; higher pay, a shorter engagement, more liberty, and fewer masters. Men-of-war's-men know that there are other advantages on the side of the Royal Navy, which turn the *balance*; but these advantages are not made sufficiently known to the merchant service, while every fabrication injurious to the Navy is sedulously circulated there.

Let us suppose the case of a ship of war fitting out at Woolwich. Bills are posted in London inviting seamen to enter, and perhaps some merchant sailors are inclined to volunteer;

but the crimps and lodging-house keepers in the pay of the ship-owners set to work forthwith to prevent them. Stories are circulated about the severity of the captain appointed; the tyranny of the first lieutenant; about the ship having the *smallpox* on board; her going to a bad station; her men already deserting, &c. By these and similar fabrications, addressed to the ignorance of merchant sailors, hundreds are deterred from entering. What then is the remedy?

1st, I conceive, to make the actual state of the Navy better known than it is; for where it is best known, as at Portsmouth and Plymouth, H. M. service is most popular. Few seamen, indeed, from those parts ever go to sea, except in men-of-war. While from the principal commercial ports, especially on the east coast of England, there are few volunteers for the Navy.* As our men-of-war never visit the commercial ports, it is reasonable to suppose that the prejudice

* I was once so struck by the unreasonable prejudice against the Navy, which the traditions of last war have still left among portions of our maritime population, that I took the liberty of suggesting to the late First Lord a remedy for it. My proposal was, to send ships of war occasionally to the principal commercial ports, to give the merchant seamen opportunities of conversing with men-of-war's-men, and learning the truth.

originating in the severity of former times will still maintain its ground there; and such is actually the case. The presence of well-conditioned men-of-war, by affording opportunities to the merchant seamen for learning the real condition of the Navy, would in a great degree remove its unpopularity.*

Another very important step towards securing the services of our merchant seamen when needed, would be by taking them out of the hands of the "crimps." This has been the object of some clauses in the late "Merchant Seamen's Act;" an excellent measure, if fully carried out, but which there is reason to fear will be very generally evaded. It is to be hoped that the reduction of the sum required in this year's estimates for the seamen's registration office does not indicate any relaxation of the vigilance required to ensure its proper working.

But private exertion, which does so much in England, has pointed out the most effectual way

* Some recent instances in the merchant service, including the notorious one of the ship *Tory*, whose master murdered several of his crew in the most inhuman manner, and was quietly permitted to do so, show that cruelties are occasionally practised in merchant ships, such as have never been heard of in men-of-war, in the worst days of the Navy.

of rescuing our seamen from the harpies who rob them first of their money, and then of their liberty. A few individuals, wishing, from benevolent motives, to afford the unemployed seamen a respectable place of shelter, established near the London Docks a comfortable lodging-house or barracks, under the name of "The Sailor's Home." Of course every conceivable opposition was offered by those who preyed upon the seamen; but the untiring energy of an individual, who devoted his whole time and fortune to the purpose, overcame every difficulty, and effected an object of more national importance than many for which the public money has been granted.

A spacious building, rather resembling a public than a private institution, and capable of accommodating several hundred seamen, now meets the eye in the most seafaring district of the metropolis. There the sailor, when out of employ, can be sure of his clean and comfortable lodging, with good wholesome meals. He is relieved from any sense of dependence by paying just enough to cover the expense; and instead of being fraudulently brought into debt, and then sold to a particular ship, he makes his free choice whether it be of the Queen's service, or

of a merchant ship.* Other institutions of the kind have, I hear, been established at Liverpool, and elsewhere; but though peculiarly calculated to benefit the Royal Navy, (that in London is exclusively managed by naval officers,) they have as yet received no support from Government. Possibly at a future time the extension of this system under Government authority may remove one great obstacle to manning our fleet by destroying the trade of "crimp."

Part of the difficulty, again, which we experience in manning our ships, arises from occasionally leaving men who have been paid off from one ship no opportunity of joining another, and thus forcing them to seek for other employment.

When several line-of-battle ships are paid off in succession, as happened in 1841-2, and none

* As this admirable institution, "The Sailor's Home," is much less known than it ought to be, it would well repay those who from philanthropic or patriotic motives take an interest in the condition of our seamen to pay it a visit. It was erroneously supposed to be made subservient to religious proselytism; whereas it is no further so than as it removes the seaman from the lowest haunts of vice, and affords him the decencies and conveniences of a civilised life. I confess my own leaning towards "The Sailor's Home" is chiefly founded upon the benefit likely to accrue to the Royal Navy from it; but the estimable founder had a higher motive.

put in commission, it throws some thousand seamen out of employment, and often reduces them to great distress. A man-of-war's-man who has acquired habits of regularity and cleanliness, which indispose him to the merchant service, will probably wait for months, in hopes of getting into another ship-of-war, and when disappointed, will at last volunteer (as hundreds have done) for the American service. It is to be remembered too that the *trained* man-of-war's-man of the present day has, at great pains to himself, and with much exertion of his officers, acquired a skill in the use of arms, which he *expects* will turn to account in the Queen's service, and which it is just as well he should not be forced to take with him to America. So far then as it is possible we should therefore endeavour to make the time of commissioning ships correspond to the time of paying others off.

The mention of "paying off," however, suggests the question, why should we persist in this system of utterly breaking up and scattering a ship's company just at the moment when they have attained to the highest state of efficiency? *

* This idea originated with a flag-officer, now in command, to whom the author is indebted for the perusal of the unpub-

What state would the army be in if we disbanded each regiment once in three years, and enlisted fresh men?

If the attendant expense be an insurmountable objection to all these proposals, there is another measure within the competency of the legislature which would add incalculably to the naval strength of the country—the partial training of our merchant seamen* to the use of guns, without withdrawing them from their present occupations. This would not be more unconstitutional, nor more burthensome to those affected, than the act for training the militia, and would have the advantage of enabling us at least to defer other defensive measures.

By entering a larger proportion of boys, and selecting (for here at least we have the power of selection) the most promising, we should in a few years increase the number of men-of-war's-men even *above* our peace-time wants.

But above all, if we wish to make the navy

lished pamphlet, which best explains it, and from which some extracts are given in the Appendix.—See Appendix, No. 5.

* The species of training here proposed to be given to merchant seamen is not of course the strict gunnery drill taught our men-of-war's-men, but that sort of loose drill, which is easily acquired, and which enables men to sponge, load, and fire, with safety to themselves.—See Appendix, No. 4.

popular, no short-sighted economy should tempt us to what has the *appearance* even of a breach of faith with our seamen. When in 1834-5 we discharged a number of seamen from the ships they had joined, with the tacit understanding that *they did so for the whole period of the commission*, it was felt by them as a hardship, and considered, whether justly or not, as a breach of faith. The reduction of expense, which was the motive of that measure, may have saved us, at the time, some few thousands; but by crippling the navy it kindled the rivalry of other powers, and has thus obliged us to raise the naval estimates to *double* the amount which we then grudged to pay. Expensive as was this experience in peace-time, it would have cost us far more if war had arrived before we had "repaired the waste of economy." It is possible, also, that the seamen then so improvidently discharged *, and whom twelve months later we should have been too glad to get, might have been found under another and a hostile flag.

* The seamen selected for discharge (15 per cent. out of the crew) on this occasion were not of course the *best* men; nevertheless, many did not deserve the stigma which being so selected implied. When a subsequent increase of the navy took place some of the discharged men re-entered the navy, and were able to stipulate for ratings better than they deserved.

CHAP. XI.

ON STEAM AS A NEW ELEMENT IN NAVAL WARFARE.

SOME time since an exaggerated idea prevailed as to the "perfect revolution" which it was expected steam would make in naval armaments, and the natural consequence has been a *reaction* in favour of sailing ships. We may observe the very same phases in the history of other inventions; as, for instance, in the highly important one of "shell-guns," which M. Paixhans imagined would at once consign our line-of-battle ships to "Rotten Row," and thus annihilate our maritime supremacy. Nevertheless, our line-of-battle ships survived the *Bombes à la Paixhans*, long enough to be threatened with a more inglorious fate, that of being made into "coal depôts for the use of steamers."

It is not surprising that the manifold advantages of steamers should have led us thus to over-estimate their power; but we must not conclude that because they are inefficient substitutes for line-of-battle ships, they are therefore of little value in their own province. Perhaps we

should say *provinces*, for steamers have two very distinct functions: one, that of supplying locomotive power to sailing ships, the other, that of acting as an independent force. Upon the first it is needless to say much. Two circumstances of common occurrence in general actions often reduce a sailing ship to a helpless state—the calm, which experience shows us a heavy cannonade will generally produce, and the crippled state of a ship's sails from an enemy's fire. In either of these circumstances, the aid which a steamer can at once afford to the motionless or crippled sailing ship need not be explained.

The value of steamers, however, as an independent force in *strictly naval* warfare, has yet to be tested, for the operation on the coasts of Spain, Syria, and China, were of a mixed character, the enemy being always on land. For such warfare, and for co-operating with a land force, the superiority of steam has been already established, excepting always the case of an attack on powerful batteries, such as those of Acre, where the heavy, concentrated, and rapid fire of line-of-battle ships can alone prevail. Not that it is meant here to assert, that line-of-battle ships *will* always prevail against properly constructed batteries, manned by skilful gunners. We have the highest military authority of the

day * against this popular fallacy, and we may have experience, too, if ever we try the same experiment against French batteries, which we did so successfully against Acre, and the absurd fortifications of the Chinese. Within "grape range," indeed, the hail-like storm of a line-of-battle ship's broadside must prevail; but there is a previous question, how is a ship to get so close? Would the present occupants of Algiers have allowed Lord Exmouth to anchor within pistol-shot unmolested?

But to return to steamers. A comparison has been drawn between the steam force of the navy and the cavalry of an army; but, except as to celerity, it does not hold good. Cavalry has a less extensive field of action than infantry, while steam claims a wider range of action than a sailing force. Perhaps it would be more just to compare steamers to light infantry, capable of acting on all varieties of ground, of covering the advance of an army, and harassing the enemy by its rapid movements. The aptitude of steamers, again, for *combined* evolutions is so great, as to admit of a system of tactics similar to that of

* The Duke of Wellington in the House of Lords, when praising those engaged at Acre, gave an opinion against such operations as too hazardous.

a land force ; and as the first principles and objects of tactics are the same ashore as afloat, it is probable that the manœuvres of a steam *fleet* would assimilate with those of field artillery. Each individual steamer might be looked upon as a field battery, and we may imagine a steam fleet (with the allowance of more time and space) forming line from column of divisions, as the artillery might on Woolwich Common.

But of such steam “naumachy” we have no experience ; and here, as in many respects, “the next war” is a mighty problem to be solved hereafter.

In so far as the greater motive power of steamers will tend to restore the close hand-to-hand encounters of ancient days, the value of British seamanship will be depreciated, and importance of numbers enhanced. But supposing that we man our war-steamers proportionably to the area of their upper decks, as the French do, we have no more to fear from close conflict than from distant cannonade. It was in the period of close combats, and before the introduction of artillery, that we gained over the French (in 1340) the bloody and decisive victory off Helvoetsluys, which, though thrown into the shade by the still greater victories gained on land just afterwards, has never been paralleled

at sea: thirty thousand French perished on that fatal day, the prelude to a century of carnage and disaster. The power, indeed, of embarking her countless thousands of soldiers, and making them thus available at sea, may in some cases, doubtless, be advantageous to France. Instances will probably occur of our ships being captured in calms, at night, or at anchor, by a cloud of soldiers suddenly thrown on their decks from an enemy's steamers; but such successes would be dearly bought, if the assailants, perfectly exposed, as they must be on a steamer's unprotected deck, should receive one discharge of grape and canister in their crowded ranks.

Respecting steamers acting individually against sailing ships, there is much difference of opinion among naval men. It was thought that the steamers' heavy guns, with the power of choosing a position, and the advantage of presenting a comparatively small mark to an enemy's fire, would make them formidable opponents, even to a line-of-battle ship. Recent experiments have controverted this opinion, and, as before said, there is now a *reaction* against steamers. In the April number of the "United Service Magazine" a letter from a scientific and practical officer (J. C. Hoseason, Commander, R. N.), questions the efficiency of a steamer's shell-guns at long

ranges ; and it is admitted that short ranges are unsuited to such vulnerable fabrics as our present war-steamers. This subject is a knotty one, in which experience alone can decide ; but, after having naturally reflected much on the subject while commanding a steamer myself, I still think that, with *patience* and judgment in choosing the time and method of attack, the "smoker" would prove an "awkward customer" to a very large sailing ship. This would require, however, a larger supply of shells than is at present allowed, and which I have known to be expended in a few hours' firing, leaving the ship comparatively useless until supplied from England.

Taking, however, a general view of the consequences likely to result from the introduction of steam in naval warfare, there seems no reason to suppose it will *lessen* the maritime superiority of this country. Where France could build one steamer, England could easily build four, and of the class of men who, though not able seamen, are indispensable to the proper management of steamers, the supply in England is still larger in comparison. That our *trade* will suffer greatly, especially until our harbours of refuge are constructed, is too probable. That our coasts will not enjoy the per-

fect security of former days is equally so ; and, allowing for the increased defensive means given by steam, it must still be allowed to facilitate invasion. Half the difficulties encountered by French expeditions last war was in getting out of their own harbours, and accordingly we find several armaments, though relieved of a blockading force, either baffled or crippled by accidents, in the attempt to get out of port. Steam effectually removes this obstacle ; and whether there be a fair wind or foul, or no wind at all, future expeditions will issue from an enemy's harbours as easily as an army issues from a fortress.

But while this suggests the expediency of coast defences, and a sufficient land force, not to place our existence as a nation on the throw of a die, I agree with the writer before quoted (p. 173.), that steam, so far from lessening, *ought* to add to our naval preponderance.

CHAP. XII.

CONCLUSION.

BEFORE concluding these speculations on the Future of our Navy, it is not foreign to the purpose to say something upon the probability of that event, which would call our fleets into action. We have heard much of a "small cloud in the west" lately, and it is no secret to any one, that precautionary steps have been taken on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet, notwithstanding that *visible* cloud in the western horizon,—if one might venture a conjecture upon the inscrutable future,—it is not from that quarter the greatest danger threatens.

A war with America, as the recent debates in the French chambers sufficiently show, would almost necessarily entail on us a war with France (a dangerous combination of enemies); and, on the other hand, peace with America would not ensure us tranquillity in Europe. The causes of our difference with America are temporary and accidental. They lie on the surface,

and are in their nature practical, and admitting of adjustment, if there be the will on both sides. Had Mr. Polk been educated a statesman, instead of a private country gentleman, the question would probably never have assumed its present state. It is not the territory itself that makes the difficulty, but the unusual manner of asserting the claim. But for this, England can have no great desire for a territory she never *did*, and probably never *would* colonize; yet she must not be rudely pushed aside, as if too insignificant to be consulted in the matter.

It is not so with the deep-seated, hidden, and *as yet* inoperative causes which predispose French minds to war with England, and which must apparently sooner or later produce that calamity. I do not mean the perfectly natural soreness which a gallant military nation *must* feel at the events of the last struggle, nor their equally intelligible wish to retrieve the material sacrifices consequent upon defeat. Serious and weighty as those causes of ill-will are, they might (if no outward event intervened) be removed by time and forbearance on our part. But superadded to the above, there is a "crotchet" in the French mind, to speak familiarly of that which with them is the *primum mobile* of their public life, and the first article of national faith, which I feel

myself incompetent to describe very intelligibly. The difficulty is, how to place this political creed of an intelligent nation in a serious light, and one which, to plain English minds, shall not appear too preposterous to be generally prevalent. To do this, we must, for the moment, exclude French authorities, however high, lest their deliberate political speculations be taken for mere flights of the imagination not to be construed literally. To come, then, to the French political creed, it may perhaps be thus expressed:—

1. France is, by the decree of Providence, morally, intellectually, politically, and physically, “La Grande Nation.”

2. It is the “mission” of “La Grande Nation” to *civilize* the world by the propagation of her own institutions, *policy*, literature, &c.

3. England, with her “selfishness” and “perfidy,” is the great obstacle to the civilization of the world (through France), and both now and heretofore has obstructed the beneficent views of France and Providence.

The *conclusion* from these premises is clear enough, even without deducing (as V. Hugo does) the Punic descent of England, “*Delenda est Carthago*.” That every Frenchman holds this nonsensical creed, still less acts upon it, I am

far from saying. If those in power did so, war would not be *probable*, but certain. But in the speeches and writings, even in the most elaborate works of the most eminent Frenchmen, we may find the *spirit*, if not the letter of such a belief. We meet it in authors of opposite politics—in Lamartine, in Thiers, (whose “History” is a justification of Bonaparte’s various aggressions,) in the recent work of Michelet*; above all, in Victor Hugo, since made a peer of France. Was it in reward of his frantic abuse of England?

How strong, then, must be this feeling in *illiterate* minds, when so philosophical and learned a writer as V. Hugo, not in the heat of debate, not in the columns of the daily press, or in a pamphlet, but at the close of two delightful volumes, can devote some chapters to calumnies against England?

In a political review of Europe, present and future, at the close of “Le Rhin,” M. Hugo vents his philosophical indignation against England for iniquitously opposing the beneficent and

* The infatuation of Michelet is the most surprising of all. He, a kind-hearted philanthropist, sees “no hope for *humanity*,” except in the “holy” (!) bayonets of France. Have not those “holy” bayonets had sway long enough from the days when they ravaged the Palatinate until they “razziad” wretched Algeria?

civilizing influences of France (under the bayonet regime of Bonaparte). According to Victor Hugo, "two principles" are, and ever have been struggling for mastery in this world—the "spirit of civilization," formerly represented by Rome, and the spirit of trade, lucre, and *perfidy*, formerly incarnate in Carthage. Rome (and civilization) "are now called Paris" ("aujourd'hui Rome se nomme Paris"). Carthage and the "Punic faith" now survive in England. This antagonism between England and France "is so striking," that all countries have noticed it under some figure or other. Frederic the Great "compared France to the dog, England to the cat." The American Indians (it appears) compared France to "Christ!" and England to "Pontius Pilate." (As if any one *but* a Frenchman could devise so *ingeniously extravagant* and blasphemous a comparison.) While, however, modern Rome (France) "watches the ocean, and observes England," M. Hugo has such "religious faith in the inevitable future," such "high hopes" for "humanity," that he cannot doubt the utter destruction of England, unless indeed she ceases to be Carthage. To civilization (M. Hugo says) she would be no loss. Europe would not miss England: but take away *France*, and the world would be left in "perfect darkness."

We cannot complain of M. Hugo here, since, excepting Germany (who can *feel* but not *think*), *civilization* is confined to *France*. "France and Germany essentially comprehend civilization. France *thinks*, Germany *feels*: thought and feeling are the whole of civilized man. Vienna, Berlin, St. Petersburg, London, are only *cities*, Paris is a *brain*. Let people think then what France is."

Still it seems there is a subordinate part open to England if she *repents in time*. She may act as pioneer to France in the rough work of colonizing barbarous countries, for which the superior and "complete civilization" of France unfits her. (Some people will be surprised to hear that it is the *humanity* of France "carried to *excess*," that retards the colonization of Algeria.) "France, for instance," says V. Hugo, "would *colonize* but badly, and only succeed with difficulty. Complete civilization, at once delicate and pensive, *humane* in all things, and, so to express it, to *excess*, "witness the caves of Dahara," has absolutely no point of contact with the savage state. Strange fact to tell, and, nevertheless, true, that which France requires in Algiers is a little barbarity!* The Turks pro-

* As the absolute *infatuation* of the above quotation, which, though meant in earnest, might pass for the keenest

ceed more promptly, more surely and *farther* (?) they better understood cutting off heads * * * That which France wants, England possesses, and Russia likewise." (*i. e. barbarity*. I cannot remember any case, however, where Englishmen went *beyond* roasting their enemies.) M. Hugo, whose kindly feeling to England is here conspicuous, then suggests to her the *policy*, even as a matter of interest, of a little honesty in her dealings. "Were it only in a speculative point of view, Punic faith is a bad banner, perfidy offers a sad prospect. To treat the whole human race with treachery, is dangerous : to spread one's sails to the wind of self-interest alone, is pitiful. Always to aid the strong against the weak, is cowardly. To give nothing to honor, to glory, to devotion, to the amelioration of others, is a paltry rôle for a great nation." — V. Hugo, *Le Rhin*, v. ii. pp. 344, 345. Such and such-like are the terms in which one of the first intellects of France vents his hatred

sarcasm, may induce a doubt of its genuineness, I give the French *original*. "La France, par exemple, saura mal colonizer et n'y reussira qu'avec peine. La civilization complète, à la fois delicate et pensive, humaine en tout, et pour ainsi dire, à l'excès n'a absolument aucun point de contact avec l'état sauvage. Chose étrange à dire, et bien vraie, pourtant ce qui manque à la France en Alger c'est un peu de barbarie," &c., &c., &c. — *Le Rhin par V. Hugo*, tom. ii. p. 347.

of England; and this is the man whom the wise monarch of France has since raised to the peerage!

Why does M. Hugo bring charges against England, which he knows can not only be refuted, but successfully retorted upon France? * Because he feels, as all Frenchmen must, that England is a living, palpable, unanswerable protest, against that morbid French vanity, which cares for no place unless it be the first, and which maligns all that it cannot equal. Does M. Hugo really believe that he can write England down, as he soon might his own high reputation, by such unworthy slanders? Are the readers he addresses, then, so ignorant as to believe that country to be *uncivilized* which produced a Newton, a Bacon, a Locke, in philosophy, a Milton, a Shakespeare, a Pope, in poetry, a Hume, a Gibbon, or a Robertson in

* It is well for the cause of peace that England is too *proud* a nation to be a vain one. Were it otherwise, the slanders of the French daily press would provoke retorts from ours, which would *tell* in France, just as the freedoms of the Dutch press did upon the vanity of Louis XIV., and the boldness of our own on Bonaparte. But while our conscience tells us we are not the *felons* which the French writers assert, our *pride* tells us they cannot believe their own slanders. We can believe (though unwillingly) that the French hate and envy us; we *know* they cannot despise us.

history? The Chinese used to tell us that we were "outer barbarians," and with M. Hugo's assurance to the same effect, we are bound to believe it. But how will France and the "central flowery land" settle their respective claims to *exclusive* civilization?

Does civilization, does *France* owe nothing to the country which established representative government, trial by jury, and that practical liberty which Frenchmen are now *beginning* to comprehend? Has France rendered any greater service to mankind? Did England do *nothing* for the amelioration of others, when she gave five hundred millions of francs to redeem the slaves from bondage, and abolished slavery throughout her dominions? Is France prepared to make this sacrifice? Is she prepared, like England, to sacrifice life and treasure on the pestilential coast of Africa, for the suppression of the slave trade, and would she persevere for eight-and-twenty years in the noble, but fruitless effort? It is far easier to slander England in these matters, than to follow her examples; far easier to show sympathy in words, than deeds; and, with every respect for France, I should rather doubt her indulging in any *expensive* sympathies, such as lucre-loving England is given to.

And *has* England done nothing for "glory," in the only sense that Frenchmen understand the word? Did she gain no "glory" at Crecy, Poitiers, Azincourt, Blenheim, Ramillies, Dettingen, Minden, Quebec, in Egypt, at Waterloo? Did she nothing for glory at Helvoetsluys, at Aboukir, at Trafalgar? Was it then no glory to vanquish Frenchmen? M. Hugo is deeply read in the history of the chivalrous ages. Will he tell us that in Palestine, our "Lion King's" glory paled before that of the vain vindictive Philip Augustus, or that in later ages our Monarch and Black Prince, our chivalry, or our gallant yeomen appeared to disadvantage on the French soil? We need not ask the question in modern days, for the history of our prowess is written, not in boasting bulletins or vain trophies, but in the present constitution of Europe, of Asia, of Africa, and America. What soil have we contested with France, and have not won it? or where does the French flag fly over one British islet? But we conquered only for ourselves, and not for the interest of civilization! And does any one believe that France laid Europe waste for the furtherance of civilization? M. Hugo tells us, indeed, that "England wanted to make of Spain a market for her produce, and a *point d'appui* for her navigation." (What

wickedness!) "France would have made Spain the sister of her influence, her policy, her *civilization*." But Spain neither asked for this sisterhood, nor wished for such civilization, and the means adopted to force them upon her scarcely argue that "excess" of humanity, "at once delicate and pensive," which M. Hugo celebrates.

The following gentle and *sister*-like intimation was made to the Spaniards, who fled before the march of civilization.

Arrêté.

1. There shall be made out lists of all persons who have quitted their habitations.

2. Every such person shall return within a month; and if they do not, they shall be reputed to have joined the *insurgents* (!) their property shall be confiscated, and their tenants or debtors shall pay the amount of their respective debts into the hands of the government.

3. The fathers, *mothers*, *brothers*, *sisters*, *children*, and nephews of any such persons, shall be held responsible in property and *person* for any act of violence by such persons committed.

4. If any inhabitant be carried off from his residence, *all the relations* in the aforesaid degrees shall be immediately arrested as hostages; and

if any inhabitant so carried off should be put to death by the *insurgents*, the hostages (*i. e.* the fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, children, and even nephews of any *insurgent*, and who may have had no connection whatever with the offending parties,) SHALL BE SHOT TO DEATH ON THE SPOT, AND WITHOUT ANY FORM OF TRIAL. This atrocious order is signed De Broglie. (Belmas' Sieges, vol. i. p. 564., in "Quarterly Review," No. 129.) The *statistics* of the "mothers," "sisters," and "children," "shot to death on the spot," will perhaps be furnished by M. Thiers in a future volume of his "History." It does not appear that this "arrêté" of "complete civilization, at once tender and pensive," was successful; for in the same place (Quarterly Review, No. 129.) we find "Orders were issued to the detachments of Massena's army, sent out foraging, to bring in all the girls from twelve to thirty years of age, for the use of the soldiery;" and this "from the uncontradicted pages of a *French* military writer!" (*Ibid*, foot note at p. 42.)

How strange that infatuated Spain should have rejected "complete civilization," and submitted to the dreadful alternative of affording a "market to British produce," "a *point d'appui* to her navigation!" Fifteen years later France again invaded Spain, and philanthropically re-

established the despotism of a Ferdinand VII. It is not clear what M. Hugo means by Britain "always aiding the *strong* against the *weak*." She never aided Bonaparte, but she *did* aid Portugal, Spain, Naples, &c. (not *very* strong states) against him.

Respecting the "perfidy" M. Hugo accuses us of, we know what *perfidie Albion** means in a Frenchman's mouth, and can afford to laugh at it: yet a writer of Victor Hugo's talents should be above such vulgar slander: he well knows, that with nations, as well as individuals, there is no better test of good faith than a pecuniary one; and what nation ever submitted to such *incredible* burthens to maintain her engagements as England? As a *traveller*, too, M. Hugo must know that the good faith of Englishmen is so proverbial as to make the simple signature of "Peter Styles, Merchant," a better security for

* It would be an interesting subject of historical inquiry to discover when England *first* became *perfidie Albion* to France. In justice to the latter country, we must suppose it was *not* before 1789-90, when to be English, *very* English—more English than ourselves—was the highest ambition of Frenchmen, and they did us the honour of assiduously copying, and successfully caricaturing, our national customs and institutions. Perhaps Lord Howe's victory was the first act of British perfidy, and such acts were very frequently repeated by sea and land.

100,000*l.* than that of a French peer for as many sous : not that the latter are *distrusted*. I should be sorry to slander any body of men ; but every one knows that no character stands so high abroad for honourable dealing as the British.

It is at least pleasant to find M. Hugo admitting that "England and Russia may *colonize* the barbarous world ; France will *civilize* it when colonized." How cheering this prospect for our semi-barbarous colonies, who may all hope in turn for the advent of French civilization, now unhappily confined to "Arabia *infelix*," and (*once*) happy Tahiti ! How India will dispute with Canada for the mild rule of a B——, while Nova Scotia contests with Hong Kong the gentle sway of a P—— !

But to be serious : in her colonies England has erected a monument to her glory, power, energy, and civilization, which has no parallel in ancient or modern times ; and if to carry the arts and sciences, religion and laws of Europe, into savage lands, be to benefit humanity, she may safely claim the *first* position among the benefactors of mankind.

Thus easy is it to refute the charges even of the cleverest Frenchman against England ; but it was not for that purpose I quoted M. Hugo ; it was to show the force of that *exaggerated*

nationality, which, though founded on patriotism, degenerates into *vulgar vanity*, and a *pitiful jealousy of rival countries*. From such a feeling, if any man in France were free, it should have been the gifted and philosophical Victor Hugo! We have seen how this unhappy sentiment affects a cultivated mind. What will be its influence on the ignorant, with no other light to guide them than a profligate and incendiary press? Let us seek an answer in the most popular of French newspapers, relating a *fact* which occurred not, as might be supposed, before the introduction of Christianity into France, but just twelve months since. The "National" states that—

"The Fair Arcadian, Captain Pritchard, which sailed from St. John's, New Brunswick, for London, has been wrecked in the Bay of St. Brieuc.* The ship was broken to pieces on a rock. She had on board ten passengers, and a crew of fifteen men. Five persons of these twenty-five were saved. Their names are, Mr. Andrew Macpherson, of Glasgow; Patrick O'Connor, of Belfast; the chief mate, William Smith; the cabin boy, Sam Slick; and 'James Madden, Esq.' The persons rescued had not

* "Times," March 1st, 1845.

time to save their clothing. Having been cast on shore by a raging sea, they were most humanely assisted by the neighbouring villagers. But on the suggestion of an individual who stated that he was a subscriber to the *Presse*, and who proposed to burn the *English dogs*, the unfortunate shipwrecked men were on the point of becoming the victims of a *false sentiment of patriotism*, which humanity disavows, but which the exasperation caused by M. Guizot's policy tends to explain. The persons present *were preparing faggots* to burn the English, when the parish priest came to their assistance, and conducted them to the hotel of the *Croix Blanche*, where they are waiting for funds from their friends in England."

To comment on the above statement would be to weaken its effect; no *human* language could duly reprobate the iniquity of the "subscriber to the *Presse*," and the "National" traces this hideous incident, though under the palliative name of "false sentiment of patriotism," to its *true source* — NATIONAL VANITY RUN MAD.

Can we then be blind to the probable consequences of such feelings, when freed from the control under which, for the good of mankind, Providence has placed them? A few years *must* — a few days or hours *may* — remove that wise

and good monarch, who seems to "bear a charmed life," and on whose existence the peace of Europe depends. It is our *duty*, then, to provide against this "crisis," to leave *nothing to chance*, and as little as possible to those moments of confusion and uncertainty—perhaps of *panic*, which would follow the sudden breaking out of hostilities.

In a war with distant America, *if worsted*, we might lose Canada, some merchant-ships, some military renown; but war with France (if attended with *invasion*) would inflict upon us calamities we have never known, and cannot even imagine. England has known France as a gallant enemy and a worthy ally,—she has *not* known her as an *invader*, and Heaven forbid she should *ever* know the ineffable disgrace, the unutterable horrors which such calamity would entail!* In this little Book (not, perhaps, without detriment to my own interest) I have con-

* Massena thus candidly avowed what were Bonaparte's real intentions as to England, if his plans had succeeded: "Bah! la conquérir—personne n'y songea: il s'agissait seulement de la ruiner, de la laisser dans un état tel que personne n'en aurait convoité la possession." (*United Service Journal* for April, 1846.) One likes this soldier-like frankness far better than the hypocritical cant about *liberating* us; *i. e.* giving us such liberty as France *then* enjoyed.

tributed all that is within my power to avert such disaster.

Mere selfish prudence would have counselled more reserve on professional subjects; but with my views (whether right or wrong) on the *uncertainty* of "impressment" in future, I could not have said less. Yet I would not be understood as taking a gloomy view of the future. Doubting the efficiency of our present system of manning the fleet for any case of emergency, and thinking that the *first few weeks* of a future war *may* prove very perilous, I have still full confidence in British spirit; that spirit which has placed the names of Marlborough and WELLINGTON at the head of *unconquered* generals, as it has that of NELSON at the head of all admirals — that spirit which brought us triumphantly through a war wherein all Europe was at times against us — that spirit (or *quality*, whatever it be) which allows to our soldiers in battle a formation, deemed too weak for any others*, and which drew from a foreigner of high military acquirements this *striking eulogy*: — "Dans les dernières guerres on a vu maintes fois des colonnes Russes, Françaises et Prussiennes emporter des

* The formation "two deep" which Napier (the historian) shows has resisted the headlong charge of the French columns. Baron Jomini confirms it.

positions l'arme au bras, sans tirer un coup de fusil : c'est le triomphe de l'impulsion et de l'effet moral, qu'elle produit : mais contre le feu meurtrier et le sang froid de l'infanterie Anglaise les colonnes n'ont pas eu le même succès à Talavera, à Busaco, à Fuente de Onor, à Albuera, encore moins à Waterloo." — *Des Principales Combinaisons de la Guerre, par le Baron de Jomini*, p. 203.

But though this sterling quality may give us the victory after the first embarrassments, arising from want of previous organization, shall have been removed, it is not to be expected that our future successes will either be as cheaply purchased, or as unbroken, as our past. We may have our Trafalgars again ; but not without the loss of a single ship, or more sacrifice than 1700 men. Future battles at sea will be *short*, but deadly—deadly as the substitution of science for blind chance, of heavy ordnance for light guns, as all man's ingenuity in the art of destroying can make them ! It is to be hoped, that war itself will be shortened proportionably, and that the power most desirous of peace will be found the best prepared for war. There is yet time : but assuredly in the next war the "first blow will be half the battle."

And now, my little Book—the first I have at-

tempted, the *last* I shall ever perpetrate, — Fare-thee well! Few will be thy readers, fewer still thy purchasers. Like “Drelincourt on Death,” thou wilt slumber on the shelves of the publisher; and though Defoe, by *inventing a ghost*, brought drowsy Drelincourt into favour, I would not that the event should happen which would act for thee the part of Defoe’s ghost! May no great naval disaster (the first in our annals) suggest to any writer the remark — “The causes of this defeat were clearly set forth in a book published so long ago as 1846, but which nobody ever read!”

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APPENDIX.

NO I.

ADMIRAL LINOIS, who, as asserted by his countrymen in 1801, and by M. Thiers a year since, defeated a British squadron double his own force, very narrowly missed a high but factitious reputation.

In maritime England, where the natural obstacles in the shape of rocks and shoals, which saved him from defeat, were understood and appreciated, Linois was never over-rated; but it required a long succession of defeats to dispel the illusions of his countrymen as to the hero of Algeziras.

His first reverse, after his victorious squadron had been increased by 6 ships, and the defeated British force *diminished* by one, must have taught him the value of a well protected anchorage, and perhaps inspired some regret for the aspersions he had thrown on a gallant enemy. The disastrous issue of that conflict, where five British ships defeated nine French and Spanish, inflicting on them a loss of two three-deckers and one 74, was given at p. 70. of this little work. As the very same ships that had previously fought at Algeziras (excepting one British, left upon the rocks under the Spanish batteries) here met again in deep water, and a reinforcement of six ships did not save the Franco-Spanish squadron, the inference as to the cause of Sir

James Saumarez's first defeat is irresistible. The second of Admiral Linois' defeats, though less disastrous than that just related, is perhaps the most singular in naval history.

Having been despatched to the East Indies during the short peace of Amiens with, as is supposed, secret instructions in contemplation of hostilities, Admiral Linois found himself, in 1804, in command of a small squadron of one 74, two frigates, a corvette, and a brig. With this force, chiefly intended to injure our commerce, he, on the 14th of February 1804, got sight of no less than 16 full laden and most valuable British merchant-ships on their return from China. The China ships, or "tea chests," as they were called, were chiefly 1200 ton ships, high out of the water (from the comparative lightness of their cargoes), and *painted* like line-of-battle ships; to which they probably bore the same resemblance that the lion on a sign-post does to the living animal.

A more tempting prize never presented itself to a fortunate officer than this helpless and invaluable fleet, without more convoy than one small brig. But the senior merchant *skipper*, who acted as commander on the occasion (and was most deservedly knighted for his conduct), resolved not to sacrifice his valuable charge without some resistance; and as the ships had each a few light guns, and some 120 or 140 men, he formed his "line-of-battle," hoisted man-of-war colours, and actually bore up to the attack!! One is puzzled here whether to admire the boldness or laugh at the impudence of this attack by the sheep on the wolves; but incredible as it may appear, we have the authority of Admiral Linois himself, that he considered his own

squadron *endangered* by the *superior force!* and *manœuvring!* of the merchant ships. "The enemy, by this manœuvre *, would have rendered my position very dangerous. The superiority of his *forces* being known, I had no longer time to deliberate on the part I should take to avoid a disastrous engagement. Profiting by the smoke which enveloped me I backed, and running (*courant*) to the E. N. E., I gained upon the enemy, who *continued to pursue* my squadron until 3 o'clock, firing several broadsides at it without effect. Such is Admiral Linois's *own account* of the engagement, in which he frankly confessed himself worsted. It is only just to say that Admiral Linois (who really was a brave officer) imagined the "tea chests" were men-of-war, and as some of them mounted 30 or 36 guns, such as they were, he did not discover his mistake until some kind friend informed him of the splendid prize he had missed.

The next repulse sustained by Linois was, singularly enough, an exact illustration of the causes to which he owed his factitious reputation as the "victor of Algeziras." The French admiral, with a 74 and two fine frigates, attacked a miserable British 50 gun ship, at anchor near Vizagapatam. The attacking force was here *more* than three times the British in tonnage, metal, and crews, with the advantage of choosing their position; but as at Algeziras, though in a far less degree, a want of local knowledge on the part of the assailants led to their defeat. The British ship "Cen-

* Translated from the original French of Linois's dispatch, as given in the Appendix to James's Naval Hist. No. 28. p. 365. The other part is also from James, but not in the *words* of the text.'

turion," however, did not receive the same aid from friendly batteries as Linois had at Algeziras, being too far from the beach to do so.

Twice did the French squadron, consisting of the Marengo 74, with the Atalante and Semillante frigates, bear down on the apparently devoted and solitary 50, while thousands from the beach witnessed, but could not share in, the unequal combat. In the early part of the action a 3-gun battery had attempted to afford some aid, but the Centurion having got under weigh, had increased her distance beyond its range. At last Admiral Linois, who, according to M. Thiers, had shown himself capable of defeating a British force double his own strength, abandoned the contest and retreated with his squadron, leaving his solitary and insignificant opponent master of the field.

The fourth defeat of Linois was by a force somewhat more near, yet still inferior, to his own. A British convoy of 10 sail of merchant ships was escorted by the Blenheim 74, when Linois with the Marengo 74, and Belle-poule frigate, determined on an attack. The advantage was of course with the assailants, who could divide their force, and thus cut off part at least of the convoy. But Linois was again destined to experience defeat, and the Blenheim triumphantly proceeded with the whole of her valuable charge after repulsing the assailants.*

The fifth defeat of the unfortunate Linois was at last by a *superior force*, and terminated in his capture. He was attacked by the British 98 gun-ship London, and, after a gallant resistance, his flag-ship, the Marengo 74, was obliged to strike. † It is worth observing,

* James's Naval History, vol. iv. p. 151.

† Ibid. 223.

as illustrative of the superior ships built in France at that time, that the Marengo was actually 32 tons larger than the British three-decker, her tonnage being 1926, that of the London, 1894. Still the disparity in metal was too great to allow of any other result than defeat; and though M. Thiers even must admit that Linois was not exactly a Nelson, he was undoubtedly a brave man.

Fortune had not yet grown weary of persecuting M. Linois, and having experienced every form of defeat by sea, he was now to undergo that humiliation by land. It seems that Buonaparte remained a steady friend to the officer who, albeit his sole success was due to the rocks of Algeziras upon which the poor "Hannibal" had grounded, and to the calms and currents, was yet the *only* French admiral who had gained a victory in a general action. Linois was accordingly appointed governor of Guadaloupe, just in time to receive the attack of a British force, and once more to experience a defeat and sign a capitulation in 1815.*

Thus terminated the career of a very respectable but *most unfortunate* officer, who nevertheless is held up by M. Thiers, in a work professing to be historical, as a greater naval commander than De Saumarez. Such he would have been, had he really performed the feat which M. Thiers attributes to him; but a man's character is best judged by his acts and those who read the history of M. Linois will hardly think him a man capable of defeating double his own force in a fair field of battle.

* James's Naval History, vol. vi. p. 355. The above is all extracted from that work.

No. 2.

LIST OF GENERAL ACTIONS BETWEEN THE BRITISH
AND FRENCH FLEETS, ATTENDED BY ANY CAP-
TURE OR DESTRUCTION OF LINE-OF-BATTLE SHIPS
FROM 1793 TO 1815.

(1.) 1794. Lord Howe's action: 26 sail of the line on each side.—7 French captured.

(2.) 1795. Vice-Admiral Hotham, off Genoa: British, 14 ships; French, 14.—2 French captured.

(3.) 1795. Lord Bridport, off Isle Groix: British, 17; French, 12.—3 French captured.

(4.) 1795. Vice-Admiral Hotham, off Hyeres: British, 23; French, 17 (a miserable action).—1 French captured.

(5.) 1798. The Nile: 13 British ships; 13 French.—9 French captured, 2 destroyed.

(6.) 1801. Sir James Saumarez: 5 British, 9 French and Spanish.—1 French captured, 2 destroyed.

(7.) 1805. Sir Robert Calder: British, 15; Franco-Spanish, 20.—2 Franco-Spanish captured.

(8.) 1805. Trafalgar: British, 27; Franco-Spanish, 33.—19 Franco-Spanish captured.

(9.) 1805. Sir Richard Strachan: British, 5; French, 4.—4 French captured.

(10.) 1806. Sir John Duckworth, San Domingo: British, 7; French, 5.—3 French captured, 2 destroyed.

(11.) 1809. Lord Gambier, in Basque Roads: British, 11; French, 10.—3 French destroyed.

This was an attack by fire ships, and hardly to be called an action.

(12.) 1809. Admiral Martin, near Cette, south coast of France: British force, 6; French, 3; 2 French destroyed.

(13.) The offset to these twelve actions, gained by the British, is the battle of Algeziras, 1801; where the French, being protected by the Spanish forts, and numerous rocks and shoals, captured a British ship, which had grounded under the batteries. The force on this occasion was 6 British to 3 French. The fairest account of the battle is in the "Madrid Gazette;" but of course it *leans* to the French.

It will be seen that the total of the above list does not agree with the number given at page 77., where 80 sail of the line are said to have been captured. This arises from the exclusion of all cases, which could not be termed "general actions," in the account just given.

No. 3.

LIST OF FRENCH FRIGATES CAPTURED BY BRITISH
IN SINGLE FIGHT.

1793.

1. Cleopâtre, by British frigate Nymphé.
2. Reunion - - - Crescent.

1794.

3. Engageante - - - Concorde.
4. Castor - - - Carysfort.

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1795.

5. Gloire, by British frigate Astræa.
 6. Pique - - - - - Blanche.

1796.

7. Proserpine - - - Dryad.
 8. Tribune - - - Unicorn.
 9. Vestale - - - Terpsichore.
 10. Tamise - - - Santa Margarita.

1797.

11. Nereide - - - Phœbe.

1798.

12. Loire - - - Anson.
 13. Immortalité - - - Fisgard.
 14. Bellona - - - Ethalion.
 15. Resolue - - - Melampus.
 16. Sensible - - - Seahorse.

1799.

17. Forte - - - Sybille.
 18. Prudente - - - Dœdalus.
 19. Vestale - - - Clyde.

1800.

20. Vengeance - - - Seine.
 21. Desiree - - - Dart.

1801.

22. Africaine - - - Phœbe.
 23. Chiffonne - - - Sybille.

1805.

24. Didon - - - Phoenix.
 25. Psyche - - - San Fiorenzo.

1806.

26. Guerriere, by British frigate *Blanche*.

1808.

27. Piémontaise - - San Fiorenzo.
 28. Thetis - - Amethyst.

1809.

29. Niemen - - Amethyst.

1810.

30. Venus - - Boadicea.

1813.

31. Trave - - Andromache.

1814.

32. Etoile - - Hebrus.

It is to be observed, that the ships above named are such as in our navy are called "frigates," though several in France would be styled "corvettes," having less than forty-four guns, as *Ambuscade* and *Baionnaise*.

LIST OF BRITISH FRIGATES TAKEN BY FRENCH IN
SINGLE FIGHT.

1799.

1. *Ambuscade*, by French *Baionnaise*.

1805.

2. *Cleopatra* - - *Ville de Milan*.

(Taken from James's "Naval History.")

The force of each ship is not here given; but by reference to that work it will be found, that in nearly every case the French crews were more numerous; in

the great majority of cases the French ships were the larger, and in point of metal there is upon the whole nearly an equality including carronades. Of course this list excludes all engagements between more than two ships.

No. 4.

The proposal to render our merchant sailors available against the enemy in any sudden emergency, by some degree of previous training, is certainly neither impracticable nor useless, though accompanied by some difficulty; and what desirable change is not?

Admitting that a mere merchant seaman without any previous training would be useless in action, and that under our present system he might find himself engaged with the enemy before receiving any instruction, it is clearly desirable that he should bring with him some slight knowledge of his most indispensable duties. Nor is it in the Royal Navy alone that such knowledge would be useful, for merchant-ships have before now repelled an enemy's privateer, and thereby saved a valuable cargo. Granting the *expediency* then of the measure, we come to the question, — How, when, or where, can merchant sailors be so instructed? I apprehend then, in the first place, that in so far as was possible it would be desirable to make such training *voluntary*, and to confine it to the younger seamen, and even to the apprentices. Also to teach the *rudiments* only of the gun exercise, sponging, loading,

and firing, so as to avoid accidents, and pointing a gun passably.

Now as an illustration, let us suppose that there are within two miles of the Tower Stairs 5000 seamen afloat, and half that number ashore. Those afloat are only partially employed, those on shore not at all; and surely, to ask an hour of their time, *occasionally*, to learn a-man-of-war's-man's duty, would be no harder than to tax a landsman's time for training in the *militia*. We will suppose, then, that close to the Tower Wharf*, and opposite a screen wall (built for the purpose of avoiding any danger), a frigate's hulk is moored with a few light guns on board. The present "receiving ship" might answer the purpose. Competent officers and a few "seamen-gunners" are appointed, with instructions to teach, not the strict exercise, but that sort of "loose drill" which, to the young and healthy, is really rather an amusement than a task. Next comes the question, "The instructors being there, how are we to get the scholars?"

First, either by a separate act, or a clause in the New Militia Bill, it might be enacted, "That whereas seamen are exempted from the militia ballot, but it is nevertheless expedient they should contribute to the public defence, they shall therefore be required, when within the limits of the port of London for more than ———— days, to attend at least ———— times on board H. M. S. ———, or other vessel appointed, for the purpose of being instructed in the gun exercise." To enforce this, it would be sufficient to provide that

* This might be done on the crown-land, thus causing little expense.

no vessel should receive her custom "clearance" without a certificate from the commanding officer of the "exercising ship," to the effect that the crew had attended at least ——— times for the purpose of instruction. Of course every care should be used to prevent this requirement being felt as a burthen; and where the master of any trader declared that the temporary absence of *any part* of his crew would be prejudicial, a written exemption should be granted. *All* man-of-wars'-men might be exempted, as well as all those who, having learned their exercise, should receive a certificate to that effect. Seamen *unemployed* might be *invited* to attend, with the inducement of receiving a certificate which should thereafter exempt them, and probably some other inducement might be devised. As to the *young* hands, they would soon take an interest in the exercise (if not kept too long or too strictly at it), and the mere pleasure of firing away blank cartridges would be inducement enough. A small prize for proficiency, an encouraging word, a little tact in management, would soon make the exercise popular with *them*; and the elder seamen, where either indisposed or unapt to learn, might be excused. At first there might, and would, be some opposition on the part of merchants, ship-owners, and others; but by carefully considering their *interests* (which should in no case suffer), by conciliation and accommodating treatment, this would be removed. One effect of thus bringing merchant sailors in contact with naval officers, properly selected for the service, would be the removal of their prejudices against the navy, and a consequent increase of its popularity; but this would be only a secondary, though a valuable, result.

The same arrangements should be extended to Liverpool, Bristol, Glasgow, &c., at each of which ports, whether on shore or afloat, there might be a place for gun exercise. To complete the system, power might be given to the commissioners of H. M. ships on foreign stations to exercise the crews of merchant vessels lying *unemployed* at the same anchorage, and to grant certificates for future exemption; but this only *with the consent* of the master. I am aware this consent would often be refused; but still it would not *always* be so; and perhaps the *power* of refusal would lead to a better understanding, and, *in time*, to a general assent.

Indeed it might be well that the masters and mates *themselves* should be *invited* to attend the exercise, leaving it of course quite optional with them. I am much mistaken, if many of that loyal and enterprising class would not be glad to acquire the knowledge which would enable them to emulate the fame of gallant "Sir Nathaniel Danse," who beat off Admiral Linois, and saved a China fleet worth 3,000,000*l*.

Whatever arguments establish the propriety of training the militia, a mere reserve force, must apply with still greater cogency to training seamen, on whom the first brunt of war will fall. We do not delay training the first until *invasion* occurs, nor *ought* we to delay training the second until war breaks out. It is true, that, under different circumstances from those of the present day, we have thought any previous instruction unnecessary for seamen, but that was before naval gunnery became *an art*.

With respect to the objections which may be urged against training our merchant seamen, it may be worth while examining the principal ones.

It may occur to many persons, that the crew of a merchant vessel in harbour (suppose in the port of London) will find enough to do in fitting the ship for sea, and taking in or discharging cargo. Such *used to be* the case when merchant vessels employed their own hands for the purpose; but at present they are usually rigged and loaded by a class of men known about the docks as "lumpers," before the crew is entered. In cases where the crew were really employed taking in or discharging a cargo, or fitting for sea, it would not, of course, be expedient to interfere with them.

In foreign ports, again, it is common to see our merchant vessels lying idle for weeks and months while waiting for a cargo, and in such cases there could surely be no objection to requiring a *part* of their crews to attend exercise on board of any ship of war present. The intercourse which would thus ensue between the merchant sailors and those of Her Majesty's navy, would not fail to make the Queen's service popular, while the merchant sailors would rather enjoy the companionship of their brethren, and the *novelty* of the exercise.

That any system of compulsory training must be *at first* unpopular, I do not deny; but I believe the good effects would far outweigh this temporary evil, more especially with judicious mildness on the part of exercising officers.

The minor inconveniences to be apprehended are not to be placed in competition with the security given to the state, by adding above 100,000, at least *half-trained*, men to its defensive power, and that at hardly any expense.

At the same time, while explaining one particular method of organising our resources in *personnel*, I claim no superior advantages for it. Other methods may be just as good; and *no* plan by which a supply of trained seamen is ensured can be so bad as trusting entirely to chance, in the manner which we do at present. I say "trusting to chance," for the only reasonable ground upon which we can rely for future immunity from defeat is, that our fleets may not encounter a *disciplined* enemy, until *time* has changed our untaught crews into efficient fighting men.

No. 5.

EXTRACTS FROM AN UNPUBLISHED PAMPHLET BY
A FLAG OFFICER.

There is no captain who has been employed during peace that will not admit that he did not consider his ship in all points an efficient man-of-war until she had been from twelve to eighteen months in commission, and particularly in relation to the management of her guns. However anxious a captain may be to have his ship perfect in that respect, he at first meets an obstacle at every step. To exercise the guns as they ought to be, breaks in upon the whole day's work: it is therefore postponed from time to time, and just enough exercise performed to fill up the quarterly report.

About the period before mentioned, a ship becomes in

all respects in a state a man-of-war ought to be : the men know and agree with each other, they work together, and are comfortable in their messes ; the drudgery of the exercise of sails, guns, arms, &c., is over, and desertion ceases, and the officers begin to reap the benefit of their exertions. The ship being complete in all respects, the exercising of guns, sails, &c., goes on regularly and without interruption ; and this continues for a twelve-month or a little more, when the prospect of paying off comes in view, and then discipline, exercise, &c., begin to relax, and, if at home, the ship is paid off at the end of three years, and all belonging to her dispersed. Re-commission this ship the next day, and she is perfectly a new creation, and the same routine to be repeated. The men who were lately in her have no more inducement to return to that ship than any other, as she is but the shell they formerly inhabited ; and although a crew may be collected, all of men lately serving in a man-of-war, yet you will have the same complaint from the present as from her former captain, as to their inefficiency and want of union, and the same discontent will for an equal period exist, and the ship be in a similar state of inefficiency for a similar length of time.

I have always considered that a peace establishment was as much a preliminary preparation for war as for any other service ; that consequently your ships thus employed should be manned with picked men, and that they should be in that state of training and efficiency that each ship, on a rupture taking place, could turn over one watch to form the groundwork of another vessel to be fitted out. To accomplish this much-desired end, allow me to suggest the following plan : —

That when a ship is commissioned, she should never

be entirely paid off; that if the ship herself became unserviceable, the whole crew be transferred to another of equal size; let the captain and officers be appointed for the period they are now kept in employment, and the men be entered for a period not under five years, and as much longer as they please; and instead of paying off altogether, the captain, officers, and men be discharged respectively as their period of service expires; and that if the ship be employed on a foreign station, the men whose time is up, and who wish their discharge, to be sent home in the first man-of-war, or allowed to find their own way.

The advantage to be derived from this plan, I conceive to be the following: first, that, as before mentioned, at the end of eighteen months, the ship's company have become known and attached to each other—they have got over the drudgery and annoyance of fitting out—of exercising in all its various branches—and have only to keep the ship in the state she is then in; there is no general looking forward to discharge. In a frigate of a complement of three hundred, after the first four years, the number to be discharged will be about three per month. Supposing a ship is out five months, and, returning into port, discharges fifteen men, these men, instead of going on shore in a herd with two or three hundred others, without a home, or one place more than another of which to make choice, each encouraging the other in every species of dissipation and vagrancy, they are landed with the knowledge that they have left a home where they might have remained and continued in the enjoyment of every comfort; they have no multitude to keep them in countenance in their debaucheries; and the want of old associates soon makes them tired of

their present life, and cast an eye to the home and mess-mates they have left ; but they know, too, the ship is but fifteen short of complement, and that their places may be filled up ; and I am much mistaken, unless the ship has something in her that makes her very unpopular, if ten out of the fifteen do not return, or if, before quitting her, they do not give in their names to return again after their cruise is out. It must be quite clear that any man would rather return to a comfortable, well-regulated mess of old acquaintances, and the drudgery of equipping over, than go where he would meet none but strange faces and all the vexation of first fitting out. Even the new men, who are to supply the five the ship is now short of, will instantly partake of the comforts of the rest of the crew ; they will in a few days fall into the mode of discipline preserved in the ship, and be as expert at their duty as any others of equal talents who may be on board ; and here another advantage, with respect to discipline, or the mode of carrying on duty, will be obtained. It must be well known, as it is quite notorious, that there are almost as many systems of carrying on duty as there are officers in command ; and that men, on first coming together, are for some time at a loss to find out the system to be observed ; but if a ship have been commanded by an officer of any professional talent for three years, and shall have been brought to that proper efficient state a man-of-war ought to be in, it is impossible but his successor will, more or less, follow the plans heretofore adopted ; for, whatever his fancies and caprices may be, he must be devoid of all sense to entirely overturn a system that has been pursued with success ; and, while he tries to bend others to his ways, he insensibly

falls into those already adopted, and neither officers nor crew will feel that change which they inevitably must do in joining a newly-commissioned ship.

With respect to desertion—which is now carried on to a most extraordinary pitch—I am quite persuaded the want of comfort on board a newly-commissioned ship has much to do with it. In corroboration I may mention, that three weeks after the ——— was paid her advance, on being first commissioned, she was obliged to be docked at Portsmouth, and during that period she lost fifty men. I was told I only met the fate of others; but fearing that the cause might be dissatisfaction, either at the conduct of some of the officers, or discontent with my own, I privately sent for some of the oldest petty officers on several occasions, and begged them to tell me fairly if any cause of complaint existed, when they assured me that none whatever did; that they had no fault to find with my arrangements, nor with the conduct of the officers; and although they could give no satisfactory account for the desertions, yet they allowed the people were not happy among themselves—that they were new to each other, and constantly quarrelling; and I am quite persuaded that this accounted for most of the desertions that had taken place. The attachment of men to ships to which they have for some time belonged is very great, and I entertain little doubt but many would serve their whole time in the same vessel.

If any difficulty should be started with respect to ships on foreign stations being able to replace the men they occasionally discharge, it would be quite easy to supply them with volunteers by the ships from time to time joining the station from England; not

that I consider such to be necessary, as there is no want of men abroad with whom to fill up the vacancies that may occur, even should most of the men take advantage of their discharge, which I am persuaded would not be the case. On this system being first adopted, there would be a little inconvenience at the end of the first five years, as many having entered at the same period would be entitled to their discharge at the same time. To remedy this, I would recommend discharging at the end of the first three years a certain portion of such as did not intend to enter again for a second term, after which the entering and discharging would proceed regularly. The army did formerly enlist men in a very similar way, and found no inconvenience from it; but what state would each regiment be in, if disbanded at the end of every three years?

THE END.

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A CATALOGUE OF NEW WORKS AND NEW EDITIONS

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